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ABSTRACT

This handbook on Classroom Applications of Writing Assessment represents the fourth and final entry in a series of interrelated publications on the assessment of writing proficiency prepared over the past year by the Clearinghouse for Applied Performance Testing (CAPT). This handbook was written to meet the needs of the classroom teacher who is teaching writing, and who wishes to incorporate performance assessment strategies into that instruction. Specifically, the handbook provides classroom teachers with (1) background information on the basic principles of three strategies for evaluating student writing samples: holistic, analytical and primary trait scoring; (2) extensive experience in the application of these scoring strategies to hypothetical samples of student writing; and (3) a series of very practical and immediately useful ideas for using these scoring strategies in day-to-day writing instruction. (Author/GK)

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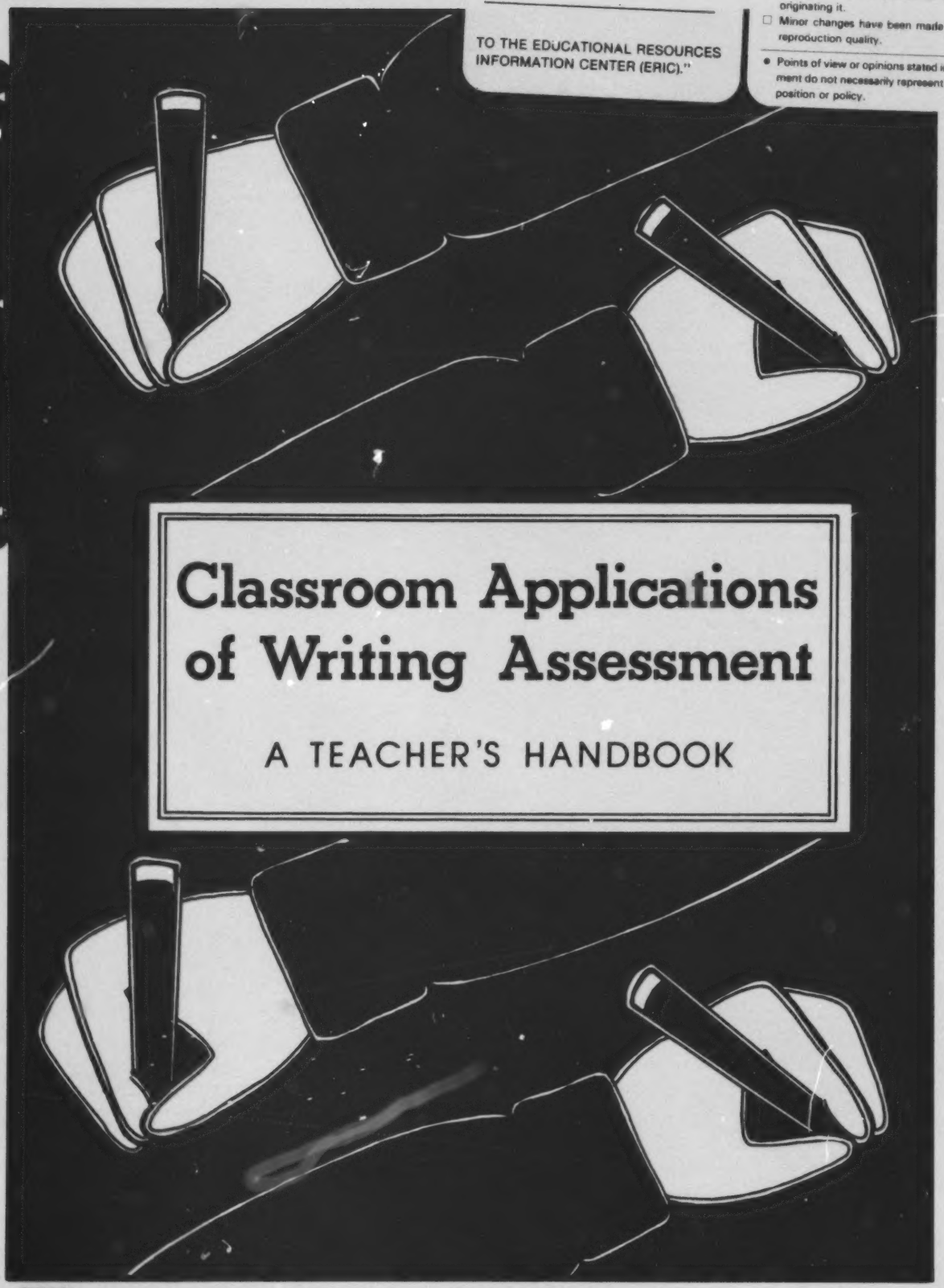

Classroom Applications of Writing Assessment

A TEACHER'S HANDBOOK

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

Classroom Applications Of Writing Assessment:

A Teacher's Handbook

Vicki Spandel

Clearinghouse for Applied Performance Testing

NORTHWEST REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL LABORATORY
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PREFACE

This handbook on Classroom Applications of Writing Assessment represents the fourth and final entry in a series of interrelated publications on the assessment of writing proficiency prepared over the past year by the Clearinghouse for Applied Performance Testing (CAPT). This handbook was written to meet the needs of the classroom teacher who is teaching writing, and who wishes to incorporate performance assessment strategies into that instruction.

The first in CAPT's writing assessment series is the book *Direct Measures of Writing Skill: Issues and Applications*, by Vicki Spandel and Richard Stiggins, published by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory in January 1980. That book provides a comprehensive analysis of large-scale writing assessment procedures used around the country. Highlights include a comparison of five writing sample scoring procedures, and results of a national survey of statewide writing assessment programs. This book is aimed at the educator who wants background information on the most successful ways developed to date for assessing writing.

The second publication in the series, *Writing Assessment in the 1980s*, presents the proceedings of a CAPT 1980 training seminar on writing assessment. The proceedings include three writing assessment specialists' predictions for future directions in writing assessment, along with abstracts of training experiences offered to seminar participants.

The third publication, *A Consumer's Guide to Writing Assessment* by Nancy Bridgeford and Richard Stiggins, contains information of value to those interested in measuring writing proficiency. First, the guide presents a detailed comparison of two measurement approaches: the direct method (using writing samples) and the indirect method (using objective tests of language usage proficiency). Advantages and drawbacks of each are discussed to aid potential assessors in deciding which approach best meets their needs. Second, the guide lists well over 200 educators nationwide capable of providing technical assistance in developing writing tests. Background, experience and contact information are provided. Third, the guide lists over 50 published tests that can be used as indirect measures of writing proficiency.

With this series of four publications, CAPT hopes to aid educators at various levels in dealing with both large-scale and small-scale writing assessment. We hope you will find this handbook helpful, and that its use will encourage you to explore other CAPT publications. Clearinghouse staff welcome your comments and inquiries.

Richard J. Stiggins
CAPT Coordinator

Beverly L. Anderson
Project Director

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many persons contributed their time and expertise to the production of this handbook. In particular, I wish to thank Beverly Anderson, Richard Stiggins and Nancy Bridgeford, all members of the CAPT staff, for their excellent assistance in conceptualizing the document. Special thanks are due Richard Stiggins, who coordinated the several teachers' workshops, through which the materials in this handbook were field tested.

In addition, I appreciate the conscientious, thorough efforts of Carol DeWitte, who typed and assisted in proofreading the handbook.

And finally, many thanks to the teachers of Portland and Beaverton school districts for their part in reviewing handbook materials, and providing many of the suggestions for classroom use that appear in Chapter V.

The efforts of these people and others have helped make this handbook a reference which all of us at CAPT feel confident will be useful to today's classroom teachers.

Vicki Spandel

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PRETEST

To see how much you already know about applying writing assessment scoring techniques in the classroom, we invite you to take the pretest. You will have a chance to repeat the test after completing the handbook materials so that you can compare your response. Answers are provided in Appendix G.

If you are using these materials in a group workshop, print two copies of the test (for pretest and posttest) for each participant.

PRETEST
Test of Writing Assessment Knowledge

NAME: _____ **SCORE: BEFORE TRAINING**_____

1. List the major steps in the writing assessment process.

2. List three different approaches to scoring samples of student writing.

3. Name the scoring approach that relies on an overall impression of the quality of a given piece of writing.

4. Name the scoring approach based on the premise that all writing is done to communicate with a specific audience.

5. Which scoring approach takes the most time to use?

6. Which scoring approach takes the least time to use?

7. Which scoring approaches are based on prespecified performance criteria?

8. If you wanted to evaluate specifically how well students follow proper format in writing a business letter, which scoring approach would you use?

9. Which scoring approach provides the most information about specific strengths and weaknesses in student writing?

10. What is a "range finder" paper?

11. Which of the scoring approaches is probably most subject to a "halo effect"?

12. Probably the best way to use writing assessment in the classroom is to show students how you are going to score their papers.

_____True
_____False

DO NOT TURN TO THE ANSWERS (APPENDIX G) UNTIL YOU HAVE ALSO COMPLETED THE POSTTEST.

CHAPTER I: Using Writing Assessment in the Classroom

PURPOSES OF THE HANDBOOK

The climate of today's classroom reflects a growing demand for more emphasis on basic skills. Teachers of writing feel the pressures of this demand strongly, and seek every means available to make their instruction more effective. As writing assessment gains prominence, many teachers are beginning to use alternative methods of writing assessment both as part of instruction and as a means of helping them make decisions based on student performance.

The ways in which writing assessment can be used in the classroom are many and varied. Some teachers have found that teaching students to evaluate one another's writing makes them better critics of their own work and, therefore, better writers. Others have found that the systematic evaluation of student writing – using the kinds of scoring approaches discussed later in this handbook – can be very useful in diagnosing individual students' strengths and weaknesses. And still others use writing tests to select students for placement into advanced or remedial writing courses. This handbook will illustrate additional ways writing assessment can be used to advantage in the teaching of basic writing skills.

Specifically, the handbook provides classroom teachers with (1) background information on the basic principles of three strategies for evaluating student writing samples: holistic, analytical and primary trait scoring; (2) extensive experience in the application of these scoring strategies to hypothetical samples of student writing; and, (3) a series of very practical and immediately useful ideas for using these scoring strategies in day-to-day writing instruction.

CAPT recognizes that many teachers already employ the scoring approaches described in this handbook as part of their regular review of student papers. You may find much here that is familiar in theme even if it is presented under a formal label (e.g., primary trait scoring) that you would not customarily apply to your own work. The purpose of any training in scoring techniques for writing assessment is not, after all, to provide teachers with expertise in evaluating papers; presumably, teachers of English have already acquired such expertise through study and experience. The purpose, rather, is to help teachers gain consistency in the way they approach that evaluation. In the classroom, such consistency clarifies expectations for students, and makes it easier for both student and teacher to set goals and to know when those goals have been reached.

FOCUS OF THE HANDBOOK

There are two viable approaches to the measurement of writing skill in the classroom. First, the teacher can use actual samples of student writing to evaluate writing skill directly. Second, the teacher can use one of the many published tests of language usage proficiency to measure writing skill indirectly. The many differences and similarities between these two approaches are addressed in detail elsewhere. This handbook focuses only on the first approach: measuring proficiency via the evaluation of actual samples of student writing.

There are three specific reasons for this. First, although direct measures are very easy for teachers to use, and most are experienced in administering such measures, teachers are typically not trained to develop their own objective tests of language usage proficiency. Therefore, those wanting to use objective measures must generally rely on published tests which are often too expensive to make daily use practical. Items for direct measure of writing skill, on the other hand, can be readily developed by teachers at no cost whatever.

Second, teacher-made writing exercises can be designed to focus on a particular aspect of writing. Published objective tests, of necessity general in scope, do not meet a teacher's day-to-day instructional needs nearly so well.

Third, direct measures require students to **write**, whereas indirect measures frequently require only fill-in or multiple-choice responses. Direct measures, therefore – as used in the classroom – are not so much tests per se as they are opportunities for students to improve writing skills through practice.

Audience

This handbook is directed to those teachers who have responsibility for teaching writing skills. It is expected that handbook users will have formal training and experience in English education and some experience with the assessment of writing skill. However, a background or experience in educational testing is not assumed.

STEPS IN THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Though the handbook deals almost exclusively with the **scoring** of writing samples, the user should be aware that scoring is only one step (albeit a very important step) in the writing assessment process. To put scoring into perspective, we shall briefly review the three preceding steps.

Step 1: Clarifying the reason for measuring writing skill. No test should ever be administered until the user has clearly in mind how results will be used. For example, writing assessment can be used in the classroom to aid student development; the process of criticizing one's own or another's writing can be instructive. Writing assessment can also help teachers make decisions. For example, the teacher can use assessment to diagnose strengths and weaknesses for placement purposes, to certify minimum acceptable levels of proficiency, or to evaluate a particular program of instruction. This clarification is essential because the reason for assessment has implications for the way a test item is structured, administered and scored.

Step 2: Planning the writing exercise. The writing exercise (or item) is key to the success of any assessment. The item should provide clear instructions that identify the purpose for writing, the audience to be addressed and the form of writing to be produced (e.g., business letter, essay). The stimulus may be given orally or in written form (or both), and may – especially if it adds interest – include a picture. A good item is clear, understandable, interesting and bias-free, thus giving the student every opportunity to respond to his or her fullest capability.

Step 3: Administering the writing assessment. It is always best to administer a writing test under conditions that approximate real world circumstances. To the extent that this condition is met, the teacher can feel confident that the proficiency demonstrated by the students is reflective of what would occur in real life. Most real-world writing includes three factors: (1) choice of the content (within limits); (2) reasonable time limits free of undue pressure; and (3) time to reread, rethink and revise the message. Consideration should be given to including these conditions to the extent possible. If we impose severe time limits, require rigid content and fail to allow opportunity for revision, we may succeed in standardizing test circumstances while missing the mark on something far more critical: that is, establishing testing conditions that sufficiently approximate real life to make results meaningful.

Once one has determined the purpose for testing, designed and administered the test item, one is ready to score results according to the approach that best suits that testing purpose and design.

SCORING APPROACHES

For all writing sample scoring methods, raters must be trained to score papers according to specific procedures. The purpose of training is to minimize (at least temporarily) the effects of individual biases (e.g., overemphasis on mechanics or content) by helping raters internalize scoring standards.

The exercises provided in this handbook offer practical experience with holistic, analytical and primary trait scoring. Though these three scoring alternatives were developed for use in major large-scale writing assessments by the National Assessment of Educational Progress and the Educational Testing Service, each has significant potential for use in small-scale in-class writing assessments. The three approaches are described briefly here, and in more detail in subsequent chapters.

Holistic scoring. In holistic scoring, the rater (teacher) reviews a paper for an overall or "whole" impression. Specific factors such as grammar, usage, style, tone and vocabulary undoubtedly affect the rater's response, but none of these factors is isolated and scored separately.

Raters use "model" papers, called range finders, as guides. These model papers are taken from the sample of papers to be scored. The process by which they are selected is explained in detail in **Chapter II: Holistic Scoring Practice**, and also in Appendix B.

Holistic scoring is rapid and efficient. Depending on the length of student responses, experienced raters can often go through 30 to 40 papers per hour.

Because no explicit scoring criteria are set (remember, model papers provide the guidelines for scoring), holistic scoring does not permit the reporting of specifics on student performance. That is, one cannot say that a certain percentage of students did well on mechanics or poorly on organization. After reading a number of papers, however, teachers typically have a supremely clear notion of what factors influenced them to assign particular scores.

Analytical scoring. Analytical scoring, in direct contrast to holistic scoring, involves isolating one or more characteristics of writing and scoring them individually. Analytical scoring is most appropriate if one wants to measure (and report) students' ability to deal with specific aspects of writing: punctuation, organization, syntax, usage, creativity, sense of audience, and so on. Criteria for assigning scores must be explicit and complete, and must be well understood by all raters. Any traits can be selected for scoring, provided they have universal application. That is, they must be traits important to any piece of writing in any context – from a movie review to a valedictory speech.

Analytical scoring provides data on specific aspects of student writing performance. But does it really reveal whether, in general, students write well? The answer depends on (1) whether enough traits are analyzed to provide a comprehensive picture, and (2) whether those traits analyzed are significant: that is, whether they actually contribute to good writing.

In Chapter III, you will have a chance to score student papers on three significant traits: ideas, wording and organization. This practice should be sufficient to acquaint you with the basics of analytical scoring. To obtain a more comprehensive analysis of a paper's quality, you might, however, wish to score additional traits, such as style.

In holistic scoring only a single score is assigned. That score indicates a paper's general quality, all traits considered in balance. In analytical scoring, each trait is scored separately; the overall effectiveness of a paper is presumably reflected in the sum of these scores.

Primary trait scoring. Primary trait scoring is similar to analytical scoring in that it focuses on a specific characteristic (or characteristics) of a given piece of writing. However, while analytical scoring attempts to isolate those characteristics important to any piece of writing in any situation, primary trait analysis is situation-specific. The most important – or primary – trait(s) in a letter to the editor will not likely be the same as that (those) in a set of directions for assembling a bicycle.

To look at it another way, the primary trait system is based on the premise that all writing is done in terms of an audience, and that successful writing will have the desired effect upon that audience. For example, a good mystery story will excite and entertain the reader; a good letter of application will get a job interview. In a scoring situation, of course, papers must be judged on the likelihood of their producing the desired response.

Because they are situation-specific, primary traits differ from item to item, depending on the nature of the assignment. Suppose a student were asked to give directions for driving from his/her home to school. The primary trait might then be sequential organization, for any clear, unambiguous set of directions would necessarily be well organized with details presented in proper order.

Like analytical scoring, primary trait scoring can allow the reporting of student performance with respect to specific characteristics: e.g., organization, awareness of audience. For this reason, primary trait and analytical scoring are often favored over holistic scoring in contexts where precise information is needed. But this advantage must be carefully weighed against the time and effort required to score papers analytically or using primary trait analysis. The more individual traits scored, the more time required for scoring.

CONCLUSION

Many teachers will find all three scoring approaches useful in classroom application for various purposes. Holistic scoring practice provides an excellent base for open-ended discussion about what makes a particular piece of writing good –or not so good. Through such practice students learn to view their own and others' writing with a new critical eye. Analytical scoring practice refines that critical skill by offering students specific guidelines for making writing effective. And finally, primary trait scoring practice centers on the importance of writing to an audience.

USING THE HANDBOOK

The handbook can be used in either of two ways: (1) as a programmed individualized instructional program or (2) as the basis for a group workshop on writing assessment in the classroom.

If you are using it as an individual study guide, simply proceed through the background material and exercises at your own pace and you will gain the needed skills to use writing assessment successfully in your writing instruction. **Please note, however, that it may be helpful for you to find a colleague with whom to share reactions, compare scores and discuss the ideas presented.**

If you would like to use these exercises in a group presentation, or workshop, please turn to Appendix F for more specific instructions on doing so.

NOTE: We are eager to make this handbook as timely and useful a resource as possible. Therefore, if you have additional suggestions on how any of these scoring approaches might be used successfully in class, won't you let us hear from you? We shall endeavor to incorporate any comments, suggestions or anecdotes into future updates of this handbook.

CHAPTER II: Holistic Scoring Practice

This chapter contains a sample test item and hypothetical student responses to that item. You will be asked to score the hypothetical responses holistically, then to compare your scores with those suggested by the author.* Given practice, and an opportunity to compare your reasoning with the rationales provided by the author, it is anticipated that you will achieve a high level of agreement with the scores provided by the author. Occasional disagreement should not be cause for concern; raters are individuals and no amount of "training" will erase all differences in their ways of approaching scoring. Consistent disagreement, however, should encourage you to carefully review your own personal guidelines for assigning scores; some suggestions for doing so will be offered.

Keep in mind that the primary purpose of this handbook is not to train you as a rater. However, only by understanding fully how to score papers, and by practicing various scoring approaches, can you feel confident in using scoring techniques as a part of instruction.

HOW TO SCORE

Item 1, (page 8) was written to be scored holistically. Holistic scoring involves reading a paper quickly for an overall or "whole" impression. While specific traits such as organization, syntax, originality and mechanics undoubtedly influence (and should influence) a rater's judgment, none of these traits is individually, directly addressed. What matters is how all traits work in harmony to produce the final piece. In a given paper, for instance, spelling may be very poor, punctuation fair, word choice exceptional, organization above average, originality striking. So perhaps the rater will determine that strengths outweigh weaknesses, and will assign this paper a fairly high score. In general, a rater makes a judgment in much the same way that he or she decides whether a novel or an essay in **Time** magazine is superior, mediocre, or slipshod. Holistic scoring relies on impressions, not on rigorous line-by-line scrutiny.

Holistic raters do not make marks on the papers they score. There are two primary reasons for this. First, in an actual scoring situation, a rater cannot afford to take time to mark papers in this fashion. Each paper is scored within a minute or two. Second, marking obvious errors often directs too much attention to one aspect of a paper (such as punctuation), while allowing a rater to virtually ignore other less tangible, but equally important features (such as style). All aspects of a paper must be considered in balance.

For purposes of this exercise, a 4-point rating scale will be used, with 4 being the upper limit of the scale. Essentially, you will be using your own judgment, based on your experience as a language arts educator, in assigning scores. However, to help you, four "model" papers called range finders are provided. A range finder is a paper selected on the basis of its representativeness for use as a scoring guide. Range finders are generally selected from within the

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*Materials in this handbook have been field tested with language arts teachers, and suggested scores are based in part on the results of that field testing.

sample to be scored. With a 4-point scale, there is one range finder for each of the score levels: 4, 3, 2 and 1. Range finder papers are considered so typical of papers at a given score level that virtually all trained readers would agree on the score each range finder should receive. In other words, you as a rater can feel confident that if a paper demonstrates about the same skill as a level 3 range finder, that paper should receive a score of 3.

A range finder paper represents about the midpoint of a scoring range. In other words, a level 4 range finder is not considered the best single paper from among a given group of papers. Rather, it is superior to some 4s, but not as good as others. If one pictures the rating scale as a continuum, the level 4 range finder occurs about midway between the cutoff points for 3 and 4.

When You're Ready to Score.

To begin, read Item #1 through carefully. Then study each range finder, along with the scoring rationales provided in the subsequent discussion. When you are ready, turn to page 11 to score papers A through E.

HOLISTIC SCORING: Sample Test Item

Following is a sample test item that might be given to a group of eighth graders* to measure general writing proficiency. You can assume that students would have as much time as they needed to respond, and would be allowed to make corrections on their papers if they wished. Also assume that instructions would be given orally as well as in writing.**

Item 1

Toby loved to hike in the woods. One day when he was hiking, he found a bird with an injured wing. Toby took the bird home, set his wing, and took care of him. He named the bird Mike. Soon Mike got better, and he could have flown away, but Toby kept him in a small cage. Toby knew the bird was ready to be free, but he liked Mike so much he decided to keep him as a pet.

Do you think Toby made the right decision? Write your answer on this page. State clearly whether you think it was a good idea for Toby to keep Mike. Then explain your reasons as completely as you can.

---

*Items in this handbook are considered adaptable for use with any grade level.

**Giving instructions both orally and in writing helps ensure that an item truly measures writing – and not reading – skills.

Range Finders for Item 1

Level 4 Range Finder:* Toby has definitely not made the right decision. Unless we all protect our wildlife, generations to come will have no wild birds and animals to enjoy. Toby meant well in fixing the bird's broken wing. But he went too far in trying to turn a wild creature into a domestic pet. No one can care for a wild bird or animal better than Nature Itself. What if everyone did what Toby has done? Soon we would have no wild creatures left. It is only natural to want a pet. But it is selfish to keep a wild bird confined just for your own pleasure. A pet may bring one person pleasure, but a wild creature can bring pleasure to everyone who sees and enjoys it. I believe Toby should set Mike free.

Level 3 Range Finder: In my judgment, Toby has made a poor decision. Wild birds are not pets and are not meant to be pets. It is easy to see how Toby would get to like the bird after caring for it and helping it to get well. Tnat does not give him the right to keep this bird. Mike was a wild thing with the right to remain free. Even things as small as birds have rights and feelings. Toby did a good thing to help the bird, but once Mike was well Toby should let him go.

Level 2 Range Finder: Here is a hard choice. For if a person love his pet it is hard to let the pet go. Toby loves Mike and he is the one who found him. So maybe if the bird is well and then he made him well it is all right to keep him for a while. But he should build a bigger cage for Mike so he will not get cramped and be sure to feed him the right things. Then if Mike stays happy and stays there of his own free will I say sure its OK to keep him for a while (But Mike is not the best name for a bird.)

Level 1 Range Finder: No. Birds do not mak good pets I think. Soon Mike could get sick and die, then Toby will be sorry. A dog lifes longer than birds and gives better compony so that is what Toby should do.

---

*All student papers used in this handbook are typed rather than handwritten to enable users to score quickly. Readers are asked to keep in mind that the purpose of these materials is to familiarize users with scoring procedures, not to train them as professional raters; therefore, practice in coping with the variable of handwriting, over and above learning to apply scoring procedures, was deemed unnecessary. For a discussion of how handwriting affects scoring, see Appendix A, Question 5. For examples of handwritten student responses, see Appendix C.

Discussion of Range Finders

NOTE: You may find it helpful at this point to remove the four range finders from your handbook so that you can keep them in front of you for handy reference.

To better understand what's behind these ratings, let's take a closer look at a few of the strengths and weaknesses of each range finder paper. We'll begin this time at the low end of the scale, with the level 1 range finder.

Level 1 Range Finder: Even a cursory reading reveals faulty spelling and punctuation. But there are more serious problems: weak sentence structure, faulty shift in mood (could to will), vague pronoun reference ("that is what Toby should do"). Moreover, the response addresses the issue only briefly, then switches topics; the question is whether Toby made a sound decision, not whether birds make good pets. Brevity per se is not a fault; in this instance, however, the response is not concise, but rather lacking in content. "No" does not constitute a clearcut stand on an issue.

Level 2 Range Finder: The opening sentence is weak; it offers a vague reference rather than the strong statement of position called for. The final sentence contains minor punctuation errors. The writer waffles a bit ("maybe . . . it is all right to keep him for a while"), but finally concludes that Toby's choice is "OK," and says so with reasonable clarity. The reference to building a bigger cage hedges the issue a bit, but does show somewhat more thought than the writer of paper #1 has given the topic. This is better than a 1 paper because the writer has made a clear attempt to be responsive, but the paper still lacks direction, style, and sense of control.

Level 3 Range Finder: Paper #3 offers an adequate, though not particularly imaginative response. The paper starts out strong, but is weakened by redundancy and limited reasoning: that is, the writer cannot progress beyond the logic that Mike should be set free because wild creatures should be free (a circular argument). On the positive side, the sentence structure is fair, aside from a troublesome shift in tense in the last sentence. Word choice is not striking, but it does the job. The writer displays fair control of thought and language. The style is a little flat, but the paper has a central theme and gets the point across clearly, if not concisely.

Level 4 Range Finder: This writer responds directly and fully to the issue. The opening sentence clarifies a position that never wavers throughout the paragraph. Moreover, the writer provides sound reasoning to back up the stated position (i.e., protection of wildlife), and expands this thinking to demonstrate some awareness of larger implications ("What if everyone did what Toby has done?"). The result is a clear, thoughtful, well handled piece, free of redundancy. Word choice is good, sentence structure sound.

Summary

The preceding discussion illustrates what might occur to a rater in assigning scores. Additional strengths and weaknesses may have occurred to you in reading through the range finders. Rating papers is a complex task. Each paper is unique; moreover, each rater has his or her own biases (e.g., one attends closely to mechanics, another to style, and so on). The purpose of scoring practice is to minimize those biases so that raters can come as close as possible to agreement in assigning scores.

UNIT 1: HOLISTIC SCORING PRACTICE (PAPERS A-E)

Unit 1 includes five papers, A through E. Score each paper holistically on a 4-point scale, referring often to the range finders provided for guidance. You are encouraged to avoid making editorial marks on the papers, and to score papers quickly, trusting your impressions.

Following the five student papers, the author presents suggested scores for each paper and a rationale for each score assigned. After scoring, compare your own reasoning with that of the author to determine extent of agreement. Do NOT turn to the **Rationale** section until you have scored ALL FIVE PAPERS, A through E.

> *NOTE: If for any reason you think you may wish to reuse these materials, or share them with a colleague, we suggest you make copies of student responses before scoring.*

Sample Scoring Exercises (A-E)

Enter your score in the blank provided.

PAPER A SCORE: _____

We should try to see things from Toby's side. I mean, it isn't every day that you get a chance to study nature up close. Now Toby has found this wild bird and he has a chance to study it and observe it. Maybe it is not the best thing to happen for a bird to be kept in a cage, but how else is he going to learn from it. After a while, he can let the bird go.

PAPER B SCORE: _____

I am sorry to say it but Mike has made a poor decision. Wild birds do not live long in captivity, as a rule. They do not receive the right food or enough exercise to keep their wings strong. What can Mike know about fixing a broken wing? Due to his carelessness, Toby may never fly again. He should have taken the bird to a qualified doctor so he could be properly treated and then released.

PAPER C SCORE: _____

Here is what I would do. Take the bird to the zoo and there let it get fixed up. So then it would be beter then the zoo could keep the bird

PAPER D SCORE: _____

Toby faces a dilemma. If he keeps the bird, he is depriving a wild creature of its freedom. If he lets the bird go, he is taking a chance that the bird will no longer be able to care for itself in the wild. Once tamed, a wild creature often becomes dependent. Toby should release the bird, but watch him carefully for several days to be sure he can care for himself. Then he will know he has made the right decision. His decision to keep the bird as a pet is not a responsible one and I'm sure that when he reconsiders he will change his mind.

PAPER E SCORE: _____

Keeping wild birds in captivity is illegal. Therefore, Toby made the wrong decision.

PLEASE TURN THE PAGE FOR SUGGESTED SCORES AND RATIONALES.

UNIT 1: SUGGESTED SCORES AND RATIONALES (PAPERS A-E)

PAPER A Suggested Score: 2

Rationale: With the first two sentences, this paper looked like a 3. The writer hit on a fresh idea: keeping the bird for observation. However, the idea is never developed. In addition, the writer never clearly states a position with regard to Toby's decision, though we can infer he is in favor of Toby's keeping the bird until the last sentence, which weakens even that implied position. Mechanics and sentence structure are reasonably sound. Vocabulary is adequate, though not excellent.

Did you agree with the author's rating? Remember that in holistic scoring, a 1-point discrepancy is generally considered "agreement." This is easy to understand when one realizes that a paper at the upper end of, say, the 2-point range is actually closer to a low 3 than to a low 2 There is space below for you to note your agreement/disagreement and any comments you may have. These notes may be of value to you later in constructing classroom exercises/discussions.

_____ Agree
_____ Disagree
Comments:

PAPER B Suggested Score: 3

Rationale: Here is a good example of a borderline paper that will probably receive some 4s. The language is clear and crisp, the mechanics sound, the vocabulary above average. What holds this paper back is a certain choppiness; it has the tone of a "short answer" about it. Ideas are tossed out rapidfire with little development, and the piece ends abruptly. At the same time, B's position is unequivocal; there is no hedging, no hesitation. Notice that B has transposed the names Mike and Toby, but this is more properly a reading problem than a writing problem.

_____ Agree
_____ Disagree
Comments:

PAPER C Suggested Score: 1

Rationale: C wants to avoid the whole issue and does so by neatly depositing the bird at the zoo. That might be a workable solution except that the question is not "What would you do?" but "Did Toby make the right decision?" The response is too brief, poorly developed, and off the mark. C's sentence structure is only fair, vocabulary and word choice minimally adequate to answer the item. There is no fluidity, no sense of control. A slight change – suggesting that Toby take the bird to the zoo – might have earned this paper a 2.

_____ Agree
_____ Disagree
Comments:

PAPER D **Suggested Score: 4**

Rationale: D shows greater insight than the other papers examined thus far, presenting two sides to the issue, then proposing a resolution that clarifies the primary position of the paper (i.e., "Toby should release the bird . . . "). The paper has good continuity; ideas seem to build on one another in a logical manner and transitions are smooth. (Compare Paper B.) This writer is clearly in control of the topic.

_____ Agree
_____ Disagree
Comments:

PAPER E **Suggested Score: 2/3**

Rationale: This paper is difficult to score. On the one hand, writer E, based on the scant evidence available, is a skillful writer. E addresses the problem directly, albeit briefly, and meets the bare bones requirements of the task: taking a stand and providing a reason for that stand. On the other hand, there is no development, no evidence of reasoning, no personal involvement with the topic. This response goes beyond concise; it's terse – almost to the point of sounding flip. It's tempting to allow the purpose of testing to influence the score in a case like this. For example, if the purpose were to see how well a given group of students could write (i.e., as a group, not as individuals), this student would probably receive a 2. But if students who scored below 3 were to be given remedial help, this student would probably receive a 3. E doesn't give us much to go on, but appears competent just the same. It is important to discuss this sort of issue openly with all raters and to agree on one approach – prior to scoring, if possible.

_____ Agree
_____ Disagree
Comments:

SUMMARY

Take a moment to review your scores on papers A through E. If your scores did not differ by more than one point in any case, you are in virtual agreement with the scores suggested by the author, and are probably ready to begin applying the range finders to a larger sample and to construct exercises for classroom use.

If you disagreed significantly (i.e., a discrepancy of two or three points) with just one score, there is little cause for concern. Rating papers is a complex skill; there simply are no clear-cut right and wrong answers.

If you disagreed significantly in more than one case, recheck any comments you noted in the **Rationale** section; then ask yourself the following questions:

1. Am I giving too much emphasis to mechanics?
2. Am I automatically downgrading a paper for spelling errors without considering spelling in balance with other factors?
3. Am I overly influenced by a paper's length?
4. Am I remembering to refer to the ranger finders frequently?
5. Am I taking too much time to ponder each score? (Holistic scoring, remember, seldom requires more than 2-3 minutes per paper.)

Additional practice

If you would like additional practice in holistic scoring, please turn to Unit 2, page 15, and score papers F through I. As in Unit 1, suggested scores and rationales are provided in each case.

UNIT 2: HOLISTIC SCORING PRACTICE (PAPERS F-I)

Score the following student papers exactly as you scored papers A-E in Unit 1. Use the same set of range finders. Enter all scores before checking the suggested scores and rationales that appear at the end of this unit.

PAPER F SCORE: _____

Toby has definitely *not* (NOT) made the right decision. Birds have feelings too. How would you like to be kept in a tiny cage for people to stare at and laugh at? Birds and other wild animals have as much right to life on this planit as anybody else. We should not kill wild animals for thier fur or soon they will all be dead. It is allright to help an animal that is hurt like maybe it is caught in a trap but then after that you should let it go.

PAPER G SCORE: _____

I know from my own experience just how Toby feels. Once a bird flew in to our livingroom window and was knocked unconscious. For a whole day it looked like the bird would die. When it came to it wouldn't eat and I had to feed it with a eye dropper. I kept it in a box in the garage. Then one day as I was taking it some thing to eat I discovered the box was empty! My beautiful pet bird had flown away never to return! At first I wished I had never seen this bird; then I would not have to feed so sad! But then I realized that at least I had helped the bird get well and that was better than having it for a pet. I would of kept the bird if I could, but it would of been wrong. So thinking about my own experience, Toby should let the bird go free.

PAPER H SCORE: _____

Toby has done a fine thing in caring for this helpless bird. Without his assistance, the bird would probably have become the prey of a fox or hawk. (What kind of bird is Mike anyway – it doesn't say.) But then Toby undid all the good he had done by deciding to make a pet of a bird that belongs free in the skies. It would have been better to let the bird die. Does that sound cruel? It isn't. Man should not interfear with Nature. At least Toby should have known enough to release the bird once he had done all he could do to help it. So no, I cannot say Toby has done the right thing. A person who knows enough to help a bird with a broken wing should also know enough to release it once the wing is strong again.

PAPER I SCORE: _____

Toby has made the best decision under the circumstances. Once a bird (or any wild animal) is tamed, it cannot be successfully returned to a wild state (with a few exceptions). Once Toby touched the bird, it became his responsibilaty forever. Other birds would detect the scent of man on the bird and would reject it. This means that Mike would never find a mate and would have trouble being acsepted by the other birds so he would not find refuge in a flock. Therefore, he would not be protected from preditors. His only hope is to have Toby continue to care for him. Toby is mainly keeping the bird to have a pet, but it has turned out for the best anyway. Toby can provide a better life for Mike than if he had to live as an outcast.

PLEASE TURN THE PAGE FOR SUGGESTED SCORES AND RATIONALES.

UNIT 2: SUGGESTED SCORES AND RATIONALES (PAPERS F-I)

PAPER F Suggested Score: 2

This paper has a touch of originality – F manages to see things from the bird's eye view. However, the paper is essentially lacking in control. F wanders from the issue at hand to generalize broadly about treatment of wild animals and never returns to the central topic. The point about killing animals for their fur could be related, but F does not attempt a transition; the reader has to bridge the gap. The shifts from first to second to third person are a bit troublesome too. Sentence structure starts out strong but rapidly disintegrates.

PAPER G Suggested Score: 3

This is a difficult paper to score; many factors are operating here. First, G offers a strong opening sentence – but then seems to wander off the topic. Actually, though, G uses a parallel anecdote effectively – unlike F, who tosses out a seemingly related idea but never establishes the relationship (letting the idea thus become a distraction). There are problems: *would of* for *would have;* dangling participle in the last sentence; overuse of the exclamation point. But on the other hand, G offers reasonably good diction, good continuity, sound transitions, and a fresh approach. The response has clarity and style. The vocabulary is not particularly sophisticated, but the personal touch makes the piece readable. In short, the paper is appealing, though less than excellent.

PAPER H Suggested Score: 4

Good sentence structure, continuity, and consistent strong tone of conviction are the primary strengths here. There are some problems with mechanics, but they are not significant enough to be distracting. What really makes this paper stand out is the sense that H has thought the problem through carefully and so is able to respond with insight and thoughtfulness. Here is a writer who has something to say and who says it without hesitation or wordiness.

PAPER I Suggested Score: 4

Notice how I presents a point of view quite different from that of most other respondents – yet manages to present a convincing case. Do you agree with I's logic? If not, did you find your disagreement influencing your rating? This is a common problem for raters, so a writer who adopts an unpopular view is sometimes at a disadvantage. I has many strengths to recommend it: good vocabulary and sentence structure, good diction, fine transitions. If you found this a persuasive paper, you likely also felt that persuasiveness enhanced the other qualities.

Additional practice

If you would like additional practice in holistic scoring, please turn to Unit 3, p. 17, and score papers GG-JJ.

Suggested scores and rationales are provided at the end of the unit.

NOTE: Chapters III and IV of this handbook, covering analytical and primary trait scoring respectively, contain examples showing how a response to Item 1 might be scored other than holistically.

UNIT 3: HOLISTIC SCORING PRACTICE (PAPERS GG-JJ)

Score the following student papers exactly as you scored papers A- I in the first two units. Enter all scores before checking the suggested scores and rationales at the end of the unit.

PAPER GG SCORE: _____

What a dumb idea. What kind of a pet does a wild bird make? You can't teach it to do anything but just sit there. So after all the trouble you will go to then what will you have. So if you would ask me, then I would say, "No way"!

PAPER HH SCORE: _____

Wild birds are very intelligent. They are hunters by nature. They will not ajust very well to life in a prison. That is just what a cage is, a prison. If you love an animal you want to see it happy. You do not shut it up in a little box where it cannot move or breath. My decision is to let the bird go free.

PAPER II SCORE: _____

Did Toby make the right decision? Who can say? It all depends on the kind of care he gives Mike. If he is kind to the bird and treats it fairly and the bird is happy (this is very important!!) then it is alright for Toby to keep Mike as a pet. But if he mistreats the bird, that could be considered cruelty to animals. In that case I would say he has made a very poor decision. He (Toby) must wait to see if Mike makes a good pet. Birds have personalities just like people! Maybe Mike will make a good pet and maybe he won't. Only time will tell.

PAPER JJ SCORE: _____

Toby's decision is understandable, but that does not make it the right decision. It is hard to let go of something you love. But the important thing is what is the best thing for Mike? The best thing for any wild bird is to be free forever. So the choice is clear – Toby should let the bird go.

PLEASE TURN THE PAGE FOR SUGGESTED SCORES AND RATIONALES.

UNIT 3: SUGGESTED SCORES AND RATIONALES (PAPERS GG-JJ)

PAPER GG Suggested Score: 2

G takes a definite – in fact downright angry – stand on the issue. Unfortunately, intensity of feeling isn't enough to lift this paper out of mediocrity. Sentence structure and vocabulary are weak; the style is arresting, perhaps, but scarcely imaginative, logical or entertaining.

_____ Agree
_____ Disagree
Comments:

PAPER HH Suggested Score: 3

Here is a brief but well organized statement in favor of freeing Mike. The writer provides sound arguments: birds are intelligent, they're hunters, they can't adjust to life in a cage. The sentence structure is adequate, but repetitious and choppy. Some variation in structure and rhythm could have earned this paper a 4.

_____ Agree
_____ Disagree
Comments:

PAPER II Suggested Score: 2/3

How you score this paper probably depends a great deal on whether you think I is avoiding the issue or just carefully considering both sides while awaiting further details. I is saying, in effect, "I need more information to give you my final decision." The paper shows thought and imagination. It offers a good attention-getting opening, too, though the cliche ending is a disappointment. In addition, I switches topics: whether Mike makes a good pet is a quite different issue from whether Toby treats Mike fairly. This shift is poorly handled and weakens an otherwise fair effort.

_____ Agree
_____ Disagree
Comments:

PAPER JJ Suggested Score: 4

Good, varied sentence structure and simple yet highly appropriate vocabulary make this response readable and pleasing to the ear. There's a punctuation problem in the third sentence, but it's minor. "Free forever" has a nice ring.

_____ Agree
_____ Disagree
Comments:

THIS CONCLUDES THE CHAPTER ON HOLISTIC SCORING. THE FOLLOWING CHAPTER OFFERS PRACTICE IN ANALYTICAL SCORING.

CHAPTER III: Analytical Scoring Practice

Like Chapter II, this chapter contains a sample test item and hypothetical student responses to that item. This time you will be asked to score the student responses analytically, then – as before – to compare your scores with those suggested by the author. Given practice and a chance to compare your reasoning with the rationales provided, it is anticipated that you will achieve a high level of agreement with the author's scores. Again a reminder that occasional disagreement results from individual approaches to scoring and should be no real cause for concern. Consistent disagreement, however, should prompt you to carefully reexamine your thinking in light of some guidelines that the author will suggest.

HOW TO SCORE

Analytical scoring – quite unlike holistic scoring – is a trait-by-trait analysis of a paper's merits. It is not impressionistic, as holistic is; rather, it calls for indepth review. The individual traits scored (usually there are five or six) are those considered important to any piece of writing in any context. In other words, they are traits that would be important whether one were writing an essay on endangered wildlife or a letter of complaint to a local department store.

Three traits. Item 2, (page 20), calls for students to write a letter taking a firm stand in response to a specific issue. You will score the letters on three traits: **ideas, organization** and **wording**. These are three of the five significant traits that researcher Paul Diederich isolated through his study.* In an actual analytical scoring session, you would probably be asked to deal with five or six traits in order to get a complete picture of each paper's merit. For purposes of this practice, three traits are sufficient.

The "halo" effect. Traits should be scored one at a time. In scoring, take care not to let your impression of one trait (say, ideas) influence your scoring of another trait (say, organization). Sometimes raters fall victim to what is termed the "halo" effect: rating all traits on the same level. In other words, a paper with outstanding ideas may be perceived as outstanding in all respects – when in fact that may not be the case at all. A writer may have truly original ideas but organize them poorly, while another has sound organization but unimaginative wording, and so on.

A criterion based system. As you have seen, holistic scoring is a normative ranking of papers, in which scores derive meaning on the basis of how each paper compares to all others in a given sample. Analytical scoring is quite different. It is criterion based. In other words, raters are given specific guidelines, things to look for in assigning scores. How one paper compares to others is of no real importance in analytical scoring. It's how that paper measures up to specific

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*Diederich asked experienced scorers trained in holistic procedures to specify which qualities of writing influenced their scores most. Through systematic analysis of the results, Diederich isolated five factors which scorers seem to focus on in rating papers: ideas, mechanics, organization, wording and flavor (or what some people term "style"). See Diederich, Paul B. *Measuring Growth in English.* Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1974.

See also Spandel, V. and R.J. Stiggins. *Direct measures of writing skill: Issues and applications.* Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1980.

criteria that counts. For this reason, range finder papers are not generally used. Instead, raters are given written guidelines to aid them in scoring.

The guidelines. The following pages present guidelines for scoring responses to Item 2. Remember that you will score each response three times: for ideas, wording and organization. The final score for each paper will be a total of these three subscores. In other words, possible total scores will range from three (one point for each factor) to 12 (four points for each factor).

The definitions and criteria descriptors presented in these guidelines were developed specifically for use with this test item. While the factors to be scored (i.e., ideas, wording and organization) have universal application, it is likely that these definitions would require modification prior to use with a different test item.

Use these guidelines with **flexibility.** It is not necessary that a given paper conform totally to the definition presented. Every paper is unique and not even the broadest guidelines can account for every variable. Therefore, assign scores according to which definition seems to best fit a given paper.

When You're Ready to Score

To begin, read through Item 2. Then read the definition and criteria for scoring carefully. It is recommended that you remove the guidelines for scoring Item 2 from your notebook and keep them in front of you so you can refer to them as often as you want. Before scoring you may also wish to look over the two sample papers scored for you at the beginning of the unit.

Score all five papers for Unit 4 (K-O) before turning to the suggested scores and rationales, page 28.

ANALYTICAL SCORING: Sample Test Item*

Following is a sample test item that might be given to a group of ninth graders to measure competency in formulating wording and organizing ideas. You can assume that students would be given as much time as they needed to respond, and would be allowed to make corrections on their papers if they wished. Also assume that instructions would be given orally as well as in writing.

Item 2

Exercise: Letter to the Chairman of the School Board

Directions to the Student:

Imagine that your local school board is considering adopting a resolution to hold school year-round. The opinions of everyone involved – including teachers, parents and students – will be considered. You have been asked, therefore, to write a letter to John Brown, Chairman of the School Board, stating your views.

In your letter, state clearly whether you are for or against the 12-month school year. Give reasons for your opinion. Be specific. Use examples from your own experience to support your answer. Sign your letter "Pat Smith."

*Items in this handbook are considered adaptable for use with any grade level.

ANALYTICAL SCORING GUIDE

Factor 1: IDEAS

DEFINITION: For purposes of this test item, **ideas** may be defined as arguments or opinions, or any thoughts expressed in support of those arguments/opinions.

CRITERIA:

4 Paper: A 4 paper offers sound ideas that indicate the writer has given careful consideration to both sides of the argument.

Common characteristics:*
- Originality
- Logic, not emotion
- Insight or humor

3 Paper: A 3 paper resembles a 4; the ideas are simply not as sound or as striking.

Common characteristics:
- Clarity
- Less insight than 4
- More emotion than 4 (less logic)

2 Paper: A 2 paper offers little evidence of careful judgment or insight.

Common characteristics:
- Arbitrary/whimsical ideas
- Emotion, not logic
- Lack of clarity
- Lack of originality

1 Paper: In a 1 paper, clarity may be such a problem that the reader can scarcely discern the writer's viewpoint.

Common characteristics:
- Ideas just a restatement of the question
- Lack of insight/originality
- Lack of clarity
- Ambiguity
- Indecipherable ideas

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*The descriptors listed here are **common** to papers at the levels indicated; however, there are always exceptions, so criteria must be applied with flexibility.

Factor 2: ORGANIZATION

DEFINITION: For purposes of this test item, **organization** may be defined as a sense of order, ability to stay on topic, and ability to relate all details to a central idea or argument.

CRITERIA:

4 Paper: The 4 paper is carefully organized from beginning to end.

Common characteristics:
- Main points clear
- No contradictions
- No shifts in viewpoint
- Good supporting evidence
- Logical order
- Nothing omitted
- Writer stays on target

3 Paper: The 3 paper is generally well organized, though there may be some lapses.

Common characteristics:
- Main points can be inferred
- Writer takes a definite stand
- Support may be weak
- Some irrelevancies

2 Paper: The 2 paper shows some attempt at organization, but the result is ineffective.

Common characteristics:
- Absence of clear stand
- Weak/ambiguous support
- Important details omitted
- Shifts in viewpoint common
- Details presented in random/haphazard order

1 Paper: The 1 paper may be so short that it defies organization, or so muddled that the reader can discern no reasonable pattern of thought.

Common characteristics:
- Writer's viewpoint unclear
- Lack of support
- Circular arguments
- Reliance on opinions, not logic
- Total lack of development

Factor 3: WORDING

DEFINITION: For the purposes of this test item, **wording** may be defined as vocabulary and word choice.

CRITERIA:

4 Paper: A 4 paper exhibits strong, carefully chosen vocabulary.

Common characteristics:
- Correct usage
- Word choice appropriate to topic
- Vocabulary effective
- Absence of cliches, jargon, slang
- Language fresh, original

3 Paper: A 3 paper exhibits acceptable, comprehensible vocabulary.

Common characteristics:
- Generally correct usage
- Word choice appropriate, not dramatic
- Slang and jargon minimal

2 Paper: A 2 paper typically contains numerous errors in usage and word choice.

Common characteristics:
- Simplistic vocabulary
- Errors in usage
- Poor readability
- Reliance on slang/jargon
- No spontaneity/flow

1 Paper: A 1 paper is nearly impossible to decipher.

Common characteristics:
- Word choice poor
- Faulty usage
- Less than rudimentary vocabulary
- Serious errors that impair readability

Scoring the Sample Test Item

Sample Paper 1	**Ideas:**	**2**
	Organization:	**2/3**
	Wording:	**2**
	Total:	**6/7**

Dear Chairman Brown,

What can you be thinking of?! Who needs 12 months of school? Not us!!

Soon enough we will be part of the work forse and then our days of fun will be over for good.

Why should we have to give up the one good times we have which is our summers off. I only hope others will feel like me and will write to you so this idea will not go through because it would be a big, **BIG** mistake.

Bye and thanks you,
Pat Smith

Rationale: It is simple to discern the writer's viewpoint; however, ideas are expressed in largely emotional terms with little evidence of insight or originality. Wording is clear, despite some awkward phrasing, but certainly simplistic. The writer states a clear position and does not wander from the main topic, but supporting "evidence" is sketchy at best. The paper is highly redundant, and offers little save reiteration of the writer's opinion.

Sample Paper 2:	**Ideas:**	**3**
	Organization:	**3**
	Wording:	**3**
	Total:	**9**

Hello Chairperson Brown:

How can I convince you to abandon the idea of the year-round school year? Maybe if you had ever tried it you would feel differently.

Last year I attended summer school and I found out what it is like to go to school all year without any time off. It is tiring! Not even grownups and others who work have to work all the time. We could come down with severe eye strain from studying too hard without any breaks.

I have met you once before during the school assembly and I know you are a friendly and reasonable person. If anyone can make the right decision it will be you.

Your friend,
Pat Smith

Rationale: The central argument here seems to be that year-round school is tiring. This idea is hardly original, but it is adequately and clearly expressed. The writer is unquestionably opposed to the 12-month school year, and never veers from that stand. There is a problem with transitions; the writer goes from point to point without attempting smooth connections, and the last paragraph is unrelated – but that doesn't damage continuity since it comes at the end anyhow. Wording is clear and satisfactory, though far from inspired. Greater development of ideas and good transitions would have pushed this paper toward 4s.

UNIT 4: ANALYTICAL SCORING PRACTICE (PAPERS K-O)

Unit 4 includes five papers, K-O. Score each paper analytically on each of three traits, using the guidelines provided. Score each trait on a 4-point scale. Enter your scores in the spaces indicated. It is strongly recommended that you score **all five** papers for ideas first, then go back and score all for organization, then all for wording. Dealing with the traits one at a time is less confusing, and will help you to internalize the criteria.

When you have scored all five papers on all three traits, check your scores against the suggested scores and rationales provided by the author, page 28.

Scoring will go faster and be easier if you are thoroughly familiar with the Scoring Guide before you begin. Take time to read the Guide through carefully **before** scoring, and refer to it often **during** scoring.

Analytical scoring generally takes 2-5 minutes per trait, or 6-15 minutes per 3-trait paper. If you find yourself consistently taking longer, you may be deliberating too much, or you may not be sufficiently familiar with the Scoring Guide.

> *NOTE: If for any reason you think you may wish to reuse these materials, or share them with a colleague, we suggest you make copies of student responses before scoring.*

Sample Scoring Exercises for Unit 4 (Papers K-O)

Enter your scores in the blanks provided.

PAPER K

Ideas: _____
Organization: _____
Wording: _____
Total: _____

Dear Chairman Brown,

There is much to be said for the 12-month school year. A lot of administrative paperwork could be reduced if schools did not have to shut down and reopen each year. More time spent in school could mean a better education for all students. Then why, you may ask, do I oppose the 12-month school year? Let me explain my reasons.

First, a young person's experience should not be restricted to school. We all need variety to grow and mature. If we must attend school 12 months out of the year our imagination will stagnate like old slough water and we will be nothing more than programmed robots.

Second, your idea undermines family closeness. At first parents may find it exciting to be free of year-around responsibility for their children. But as years pass and there is no more closeness or companionship in the family, parents will regret this decision. By then it will be too late, for school will not just fill our lives, but it will be our lives. Familes will come second.

Chairman Brown, you must think of your constituences. Do not act in haste.

Sincerely yours,
Pat Smith

PAPER L

Ideas: _____
Organization: _____
Wording: _____
Total: _____

Dear Chairman Brown

Keep the schools open. No way! This is a crummy idea and it is again our personal right So if you can open the school and then you are aksing to have a rebelion on you hands That will be your falt.

From Pat Smith

PAPER M

Ideas: _____
Organization: _____
Wording: _____
Total: _____

Dear Chairman:

The 12 month school year you suggest presents a problem. Alot of kids will not mind going to school al' year because it will get them off the streets and give them something to do. I am not one of them. Because have you thought about the hundreds of kids who depend on summer jobs. For them it will mean a big loss of income. Parents, I think will like your idea and they should have a say in making this rule. I don't want to give you a bad time but your idea won't be a big hit with most of the kids. Most kids do not enjoy school all that much. I myself am planning to work this summer so this will be hard for me. Maybe you could think about making summer vacation shorter but not as much. Thanks.

Pat Smith

PAPER N

Ideas: _____
Organization: _____
Wording: _____
Total: _____

Dear Mr. Brown,

Your thinking has caused a dilemma. You have come up with the idea that is good but that nobody will like. I hav the solushion to you problem.

Keep the 12 month school year but do not mak every school year twelve months long. By that I mean to let students go through at their own rate so if ninth grade taks 12 months that is O.K. or if it taks some kids only five months that is fine too and then they would go right on to 10th grade with no time wasted. This way the kids could finish school as fast as they wanted and go on to other stuff. For the slow kids it would be a good idea, they would be in school all the time and would not have so much time to forget things like over the summer holliday. So I say to keep your idea about the 12th month school, it is a good idea only do not mak the fast kids and the slow kids go to school in the same amount of time but let the fast kids go through faster.

Sincerly,
Julie Baker

PAPER O

Ideas: _____
Organization: _____
Wording: _____
Total: _____

Dear John Brown,

As Chairman of the Board I am asking you to forget the 12 month year it will only lead to problems. Think first of the energy crissis. If we have school all the time what will it take to heat the buildings and classrooms. Our heat and lights will be shut off then every one will suffer. Their are other way. Like you would give us more vacashions only shorter so it would still add up to 3 months. Give us more time at Christmass when its cold and not so much time in the summer when it is hot. But do not take away all our privleges, ok.

Sincerely,
Pat K. Smith

PLEASE TURN THE PAGE FOR SUGGESTED SCORES AND RATIONALES

UNIT 4: SUGGESTED SCORES AND RATIONALES (PAPERS K-O)

PAPER K **Suggested Scores**

		Agree	Disagree*
Ideas:	4		
Organization:	4		
Wording:	4		
Total:	12		

Rationale: This is a superior paper in all three respects. K has considered both sides of the argument, then taken a clear stand in opposition. K's arguments are imaginative, forceful and colorfully expressed ("stagnate like old slough water"). The vocabulary is rich but not stuffy; it enhances readability. Ideas are carefully paragraphed and logically ordered. A minor spelling error ("constituences"), but no real problems; K is a writer in control.

(Space is provided here for any comments you wish to make for your own future reference.)
Comments:

PAPER L **Suggested Scores**

		Agree	Disagree
Ideas:	2		
Organization:	1		
Wording:	2		
Total:	5		

Rationale: Here is a highly emotional response to the issue, with little evidence of careful thought. The "ideas" are little more than the writer's opinion, though certainly L's stand is clear (despite punctuation problems in the first two sentences). The paper lacks any sense of organization; it is too short, and provides no supportive evidence for its only argument: "This is a crummy idea." Vocabulary is weak to be sure; however, it cannot truly be said that L's meaning is undecipherable. One senses that L would have a good deal more to say given a more sophisticated vocabulary.

Comments:

*Remember that a one-point discrepancy is not considered true disagreement. Only discrepancies of two or three points are judged disagreements.

PAPER M **Suggested Scores**

		Agree	Disagree
Ideas:	2		
Organization:	2		
Wording:	2		
Total:	6		

Rationale: What a jumble of ideas M's paper is! The 12-month school year, says M, will get kids off the streets and "give them something to do" – yet later M reneges a bit, suggesting that the "idea won't be a big hit with most of the kids." In between, M wanders from the topic completely to introduce the subject of parent involvement, an issue never explored or developed. At the end, M injects an afterthought about shortening summer vacation. While one can reasonably infer M's opposition, the thinking overall is disjointed, the wording simplistic. This is a paper that opens on a positive note but goes nowhere.

Comments:

PAPER N **Suggested Scores**

		Agree	Disagree
Ideas:	3		
Organization:	3		
Wording:	2		
Total:	8		

Rationale: N's idea reflects some originality: allowing students to go through school at their own rate, while retaining the 12-month school year. Unfortunately, the paper is so wordy and redundant, the originality is virtually buried. The wording is clumsy and ineffective. On the other hand, the paper is reasonably well organized. The first paragraph introduces the solution, the second presents it in orderly – albeit tedious – fashion. Simple condensation and snappy vocabulary could have rescued this mundane response.

> *NOTE: Mechanics are poor in this paper. Did you find that factor influencing your scoring of other factors? Remember the importance of scoring each factor* ***separately.***

Comments:

PAPER O **Suggested Scores**

		Agree	Disagree
Ideas:	3		
Organization:	3		
Wording:	2		
Total:	7		

Rationale: O opens with a misplaced modifier and never quite gets back on track. "Think first of our energy crissis" [sic] sounds hopeful, but O never gets beyond the energy crisis, so the paper dwindles to a one-point argument – and is thus weakened considerably. This paper (like N's) suffers most from ineffective wording. This writer is not in control; in fact, the letter seems laborious and awkward. Still, O takes a definite stand and sticks by it. The letter is not hard to follow – it's just dull reading.

Comments:

SUMMARY

Take a moment to review your scores on papers K through O. If your scores did not differ by more than one point (three points for "totals") in any case, you are in virtual agreement with the scores suggested by the author, and are probably ready to begin incorporating analytical scoring procedures into classroom instruction.

If you disagreed significantly (i.e., a discrepancy of two or three points) with just one score, there is little cause for concern. No two raters will ever agree fully on any given set of papers.

If you disagreed significantly in more than one case, however, recheck any comments you noted in the **Rationale** section; then ask yourself the following questions:

1. Am I allowing poor mechanics to unduly influence my scoring of other factors?

2. Am I referring to the Scoring Guide (i.e., criteria) frequently?

3. Am I remembering to rate each factor independently, regardless of how well or how poorly a student does with respect to other factors?

4. Am I taking time to read each letter through or am I skimming too quickly?

   NOTE: It's tempting to rush through a particularly dull piece; remember, exceptional ***ideas*** *may be camouflaged by poor* ***wording****.*

5. Am I allowing the tone of the letter to unduly influence my judgment?

   NOTE: The most courteous letter may or may not be the best; it may indeed have little to commend it but courtesy.

Additional practice

If you would like additional practice with analytical scoring, please turn to Unit 5, page 31, and score papers P through T. As with Unit 4, suggested scores and rationales are provided.

UNIT 5: ANALYTICAL SCORING PRACTICE (PAPERS P-T)

Score the following student papers exactly as you scored papers K-O in Unit 4. Use the same scoring guidelines. Enter all subscores and totals before checking the suggested scores and rationales at the end of this unit.

PAPER P

Ideas: _____
Organization: _____
Wording: _____
Total: _____

Dear Chairman Brown:

Who says we should have school for 12 months out of the year? That person should have their head examined. Its one thing to keep us going to school all during the winter when it is raining and cold and their is not that much stuff going on anyway. But now we are suposed to just say oh to heck with summer vacation and keep right on going to school like we had nothing better to do? Does this make sense to you? No reasonable person would vote for this measure.

Pat Smith

PAPER Q

Ideas: _____
Organization: _____
Wording: _____
Total: _____

Dear Chairman Brown,

I am writing this letter to inform you that I strongly oppose the 12-month school year for three reasons.

First, students need an occasional break in order to do their best work. We return from summer vacation refreshed and invigorated, ready for the year ahead. If we must work the year around, many of us will grow bored and lose interest in school. I predict the drop-out rate will increase substantially.

Second, teachers need a break too. Would you like to face 30 years in the classroom with only a day off here and there? It's inhuman. Our teachers need time to plan lessons and think about the curriculum for the coming year. This takes time and energy. Without summer vacation they will have neither one.

And last, many students need to work during summer vacation. They need the money. You can not get a job anywhere with only two weeks off. Will you deprive students of this important opportunity?

Please consider the points I have made in this letter and present them to your Board. Your decision effects the lives of many people. I hope you make the right choice.

Sincerely,
Pat Smith

PAPER R

Ideas: _____
Organization: _____
Wording: _____
Total: _____

Dear Mr. Chairman Brown,

I got your letter about the 12-months school year and I am inraged. How can you be so short sited? Do you think we will just stand by and let you take all the fun out of our lives? We need our vacations to rest up or we will die! We are too young to be slavs. No matter how important a good education may be. We are not saying it is not important what we are saying is for you to think about it from our side. Will we learn more if we go more? No! It is useles to forse us against our wills.

Sincerely your
Pat Smith

PAPER S

Ideas: _____
Organization: _____
Wording: _____
Total: _____

Dear Chairman Brown,

Thank you for emerging with this supurb idea. Many of your students will be imensely grateful to you. It is our belief that too many students waste the time known as "summer vacation." We could spend this time more profitabally attending school and learning something that would make our lives easier. The 12-month school year is the perfect solution to year-around school. It gets rid of wasted summer time and lengthens our learning opportunities at the same time. My only question to you is why didnt someone think of this sooner and save us all alot of grief.
Thank you again Chairman Brown --
Pat Smith

PAPER T

Ideas: _____
Organization: _____
Wording: _____
Total: _____

Dear Chairman Brown,

I personally like your idea a lot, but it won't work. Here's why.

First, the kids won't like it. They might go along for a year or two, but then they will get pretty bored and want their summer vacation back.

Second of all, teachers will hate this idea. Alot of teachers become teachers because this is a job that offers good hours. Now you are taking that benefit away. Be careful! Soon no one will want to be a teacher and then there will be no one to run the schools.

Thirdly, you are going to get parents angry. Their vacation plans will be ruined if summer vacation for kids is taken away.

Can you afford to have all these people mad at you? You will have no friends left! So . . . think it over and then make up your mind. We are all waiting for your decision.

Sincerely,
Pat Smith

PLEASE TURN THE PAGE FOR SUGGESTED SCORES AND RATIONALES.

UNIT 5: SUGGESTED SCORES AND RATIONALES (P-T)

PAPER P **Suggested Scores**

		Agree	Disagree
Ideas:	2		
Organization:	2		
Wording:	1/2		
Total:	5/6		

Rationale: This paper is, to say the least, limited in scope. P argues that the 12-month school year is a bad idea because he/she doesn't like it – an argument that is neither insightful nor striking. The language is unsophisticated and flawed (e.g., "That person should have their head examined"). As brief as this response is, it's wordy, given its content. Organization is difficult to score on such a paper. One can, certainly, follow the argument; there's no ambiguity. On the other hand, what is there to follow? P basically dislikes school and hopes the reader will join in keeping the school year as short as possible – not persuasive.

Comments:

PAPER Q **Suggested Scores**

		Agree	Disagree
Ideas:	4		
Organization:	4		
Wording:	4		
Total:	12		

Rationale: Here's a letter that shows some thought. The ideas are clearly expressed and go beyond the writer's own biases: increased dropout rates, imposition on teachers' time, decreased opportunities for students to work. The wording is appropriate to the topic; however, if you felt the formal tone was a little forced in spots, you may have scored Q's letter 3 in this regard. With respect to organization, this paper is a classic: an intro, three point-by-point paragraphs, and a nifty wrap-up. Who could ask for more?

Comments:

PAPER R **Suggested Scores**

		Agree	Disagree
Ideas:	1		
Organization:	2		
Wording:	2/3		
Total:	5/6		

Rationale: R's approach is a little different. "I got your letter . . ." What letter? R doesn't have a lot to say: you shouldn't make slaves of us. That's about it. Nevertheless, the wording has a certain charm; it's forceful, to the point, unquestionably clear. The writer manages to inject emotion without coming across as angry (despite the claim to be "inraged" [sic]). It's pretty tough to organize a paper that doesn't say much, and indeed R's letter breaks down here. A touch of charm elevates this letter above total disaster, but can't save it.

Comments:

PAPER S **Suggested Scores**

		Agree	Disagree
Ideas:	2		
Organization:	1/2		
Wording:	4		
Total:	7/8		

Rationale: Watch out for the halo effect on this one. S's letter is worded so well, it seems to be an excellent piece. But take a closer look. It's actually a clever bit of redundancy that repeats the same argument in a variety of ways: i.e., that summer vacation is a waste of time. (One may also question S's sincerity, but that's another issue altogether.) And what about this bit of nonlogic: "The 12-month school year is the perfect solution to year-around school." This circular nonsense is almost "political" in its evasiveness. Suppose you were Chairman Brown. Would you be charmed by the ingratiating tone, or put off by the lack of insight? Your personal response to S's style will no doubt affect your scoring.

Comments:

PAPER T **Suggested Scores**

		Agree	Disagree
Ideas:	2		
Organization:	4		
Wording:	3		
Total:	9		

Rationale: T has done the impossible: organized a virtually content-free paper. Compare letter Q, which is similar in format, but gives us so much more. T's letter is deceptive. At first glance, it seems to be a powerhouse of ideas. In fact, though, it all comes down to this: an unpopular idea is a poor idea. Wording is unimaginative, but certainly adequate. The personal tone adds appeal too (e.g., "Be careful!" "You will have no friends left!"). But as we saw with paper R, charm without insight can't carry the day.

Comments:

TO SEE HOW A RESPONSE TO ITEM 1 MIGHT BE SCORED ANALYTICALLY (VERSUS HOLISTICALLY), PLEASE TURN THE PAGE.

COMPARING SCORING APPROACHES: HOLISTIC vs. ANALYTICAL

How would a paper scored holistically stand up to analytical scoring? Let's take a look. Following are two papers from Chapter II on holistic scoring; the original holistic scores are shown here for comparative purposes.

In addition, these responses have been scored according to the Analytical Scoring Guide presented in Chapter III. Readers are asked to keep in mind that these guidelines were developed for use with Item 2, and are used unmodified with Item 1 for illustrative purposes only. It is always best to develop scoring guidelines in conjunction with the item for which they are intended. (For the reader's convenience, Item 1 is reprinted here.)

ITEM 1 (Reprinted from page 8)

Toby loved to hike in the woods. One day when he was hiking, he found a bird with an injured wing. Toby took the bird home, set his wing, and took care of him. He named the bird Mike. Soon Mike got better, and he could have flown away, but Toby kept him in a small cage. Toby knew the bird was ready to be free, but he liked Mike so much he decided to keep him as a pet.

Do you think Toby made the right decision? Write out your answer on this page. State clearly whether you think it was a good idea for Toby to keep Mike. Then explain your reasons as completely as you can.

PAPER A (Reprinted from page 11)

We should try to see things from Toby's side. I mean, it isn't every day that you get a chance to study nature up close. Now Toby has found this wild bird and he has a chance to study it and observe it. Maybe it is not the best thing to happen for a bird to be kept in a cage, but how else is he going to learn from it. After a while, he can let the bird go.

SUGGESTED SCORES

Holistic: 2

(See p. 12 for rationale.)

Analytical:

Ideas:	2
Organization:	1/2
Wording:	2
Total:	5/6

Rationale: A came up with an original idea, but didn't take it anywhere. What about studying the bird up close? A shifts quite arbitrarily to the ill effects of keeping a bird caged, then ends on a weak, indecisive note that leaves the reader dangling. Lack of direction and poor development thwart any efforts at organization. Wording is barely adequate, certainly far from inspired. Overall, the response degenerates from promising to dull.

PAPER D (Reprinted from page 11)

Toby faces a dilemma. If he keeps the bird, he is depriving a wild creature of its freedom. If he lets the bird go, he is taking a chance that the bird will no longer be able to care for itself in the wild. Once tamed, a wild creature often becomes dependent. Toby should release the bird, but watch him carefully for several days to be sure he can care for himself. Then he will know he has made the right decision. His decision to keep the bird as a pet is not a responsible one and I'm sure that when he reconsiders he will change his mind.

SUGGESTED SCORES

Holistic: 4

(See p. 13 for rationale.)

Analytical:

Ideas:	4
Organization:	4
Wording:	4
Total:	12

Rationale: D has considered both sides of the argument and takes a clear, strong stand – no hedging. The response is concise, the points well ordered. The vocabulary is sound, the rhythm easy on the ear. D's easy going style is as natural as it is articulate. Seldom does a writer compress intro, main argument and viable conclusion into so short a space. This is a fine performance.

SUMMARY

You may wish to score other papers from Units 1, 2 and 3 analytically, and compare results with the holistic scores. (For comparative purposes, a holistic 4 is roughly equivalent to an analytical 10-12, a 3 to an analytical 7-9, a 2 to an analytical 4-6, and a 1 to a 3.) This comparative scoring is a worthwhile classroom exercise. To elicit some lively discussion, try a comparative holistic scoring of a paper like T (page 46), in which the analytical subscores differ. Does analytical scoring provide significantly more information than holistic scoring?

THIS CONCLUDES THE CHAPTER ON ANALYTICAL SCORING. THE FOLLOWING CHAPTER OFFERS PRACTICE IN PRIMARY TRAIT SCORING.

CHAPTER IV: Primary Trait Scoring Practice

This chapter is based on the same sample test item used in **Chapter III: Analytical Scoring Practice.** You will, however, be asked to score papers according to different criteria from those you previously applied. As before, you will score a series of papers, then have a chance to check your scores against those suggested by the author. As with the holistic and analytical practice, a high level of agreement is anticipated.

HOW TO SCORE

Primary trait scoring is based on the premise that different traits are important to different pieces of writing. For example, in a set of instructions for assembling a bicycle, the most important (that is, primary) trait may be clarity, for unless the instructions are clear and unambiguous, it is unlikely the reader will be able to put the bike together. Another trait – say, tone – may be relatively unimportant in a set of bicycle assembly instructions, but may be critical in a department store's letter of apology to a disgruntled customer.

The primary trait approach assumes that everything is written to an audience, and that good writing will have the desired effect upon that audience. For example, a good letter of application will get the job interview, a good campaign speech will win votes.

As you recall from Chapter III, Item 2 asks "Pat Smith" to write a letter to the Chairman of the School Board, commenting on the advisability of a 12-month school year. The best letters, presumably, will be those that persuade Chairman Brown to adopt the writer's point of view. In other words, the primary trait in this case is **persuasiveness.** For purposes of scoring, you are asked to put yourself as reader in Chairman Brown's place – to pretend, if you will, that you are Chairman Brown. Accordingly, those letters that move you, that persuade you most, will receive the highest scores. Letters that are not persuasive cannot receive a high score, regardless of how well written they may be in other respects (e.g., in terms of word choice, sentence structure, organization).

Like analytical scoring, primary trait scoring is a criterion based – not a normative based – system. Therefore, scoring guidelines, rather than range finders, are used in assigning scores.

When you're ready to score

On the following page is a Guide for assigning primary trait scores on a 4-point scale. (Note also the definition of the special "zero category," which is introduced in this chapter.) Read the Guide carefully. Scoring will go faster if you are thoroughly familiar with criteria. It is recommended that you remove the Guide from your notebook and keep it in front of you while scoring so that you can refer to it often. When you have finished studying the Scoring Guide, take a few moments to review Item 2, page 42. Before scoring. you may also wish to look over the two sample papers scored for you at the beginning of this unit.

PRIMARY TRAIT SCORING GUIDE

CRITERIA:

4 Paper: **Highly Persuasive**

The writer takes a strong stand either pro or con and defends it with solid evidence.

Common characteristics:

- Arguments logical
- Arguments backed by fact/experience
- Rhetorical excellence
- Impressive style

NOTE: The reader may agree or disagree with the writer's point of view; this is irrelevant and must not be allowed to affect scoring. A reader may, for example, assign a paper a 4 on the basis that "This was a well written letter conveying a sound and highly persuasive argument – even though it does not express the position I would have taken."

3 Paper: **Generally Persuasive**

The writer's viewpoint is clear, but supporting evidence may be less effectively presented than in a 4 paper.

Common characteristics:

- Arguments logical
- Awareness of audience
- Adequate wording, but no real flair
- Supporting evidence may be flawed or weak
- Less rhetorically effective than a 4

2 Paper: **Generally Unpersuasive**

A 2 paper overall lacks the power to persuade.

Common characteristics:

- Viewpoint not clearly stated, but can be inferred
- Support weak/irrelevant
- Poor awareness of audience
- Inappropriate tone
- Reliance on emotion, not topic
- Poor word choice

1 Paper:

Highly Unpersuasive

Unlike a 2 paper, a 1 paper may be virtually incomprehensible or may exhibit no effort to persuade the reader.

Common characteristics:
- Viewpoint hard to determine
- Lack of support
- No awareness of audience
- Inappropriate tone
- Poor word choice
- Reliance on emotion, not logic
- Less continuity than a 2

0 Paper:

"Zero" is a special category.* It is not an indicator of quality (no paper is qualitatively below the 1 level). Zero should be assigned to papers that are blank, totally illegible, written in a language other than English, or that address a completely different topic (e.g., "My Dog Fred").

*The "zero category," though first introduced in this chapter, is often used in holistic and analytical scoring systems as well.

PRIMARY TRAIT SCORING: SAMPLE TEST ITEM

For your convenience, Item 2 is repeated here. Note that students are explicitly directed to make the letter as persuasive as they can. As before, you can assume that students would be given as much time as they needed to respond, and that they would have a chance to make corrections on their papers if they wished. Also assume that instructions would be given orally as well as in writing. Respondents are ninth graders.

Item 2

Exercise: Letter to the Chairman of the School Board

Directions to the Student:

> Imagine that your local school board is considering adopting a resolution to hold school year-round. The opinions of everyone involved – including teachers, parents and students – will be considered. You have been asked, therefore, to write a letter to John Brown, Chairman of the School Board, stating your views.
>
> In your letter, state clearly whether you are for or against the 12-month school year. Give reasons for your opinion. Be specific. Use examples from your own experience to support your answer. Sign your letter "Pat Smith."
>
> Be as convincing as you can. Your letter will be scored on how **persuasive** it is.

Scoring the Sample Test Item

Sample Paper I: Score: 2

Chairman Brown,
Don't do it. Its a bad idea. For every person that likes the idea there will be 10 that don't. People will hate you for this lousy idea. Forget it!!

Thats my opinon.
Patrick Smith

Rationale: Though there is no clear statement of position, this writer's viewpoint is easy to infer; therefore, this paper is scored a 2. The paper has little else to commend it, however. The vocabulary is ineffective, the tone almost belligerent. The paper relies heavily on emotion; indeed, support is virtually absent.

Sample Paper II: Score: 3

Dear Chairman Brown,

I like the idea of the 12-month school year and I will tell you why.

First, I am too young to get a job during the summer (except for babysitting, which I do not like) so I might just as well be in school doing something.

In the second place, having summer school will give work to all the teachers that are unemployed because they can't get regular jobs. At least they would have three months (about) of work and that is better than nothing.

But the most important reason is that you will cut down on juvenal delinquancy. If kids are in school all the time they will not have as much of a chance to get in to trouble. Plus they will be learning more at the same time. About the only kids who will be against this is the ones who are lazy, and they will be against just about anything anyway.

Thanks for your time.
Pat Smith

Rationale: This paper offers a clear statement of position backed by three distinct arguments. There is apparent awareness of audience; tone and wording are appropriate. The paper is, in fact, a borderline 4, and your rating depends on whether you consider the style rhetorically effective. There are some awkward moments: " . . . three months (about) of work . . . " and " . . . is the ones who are lazy . . . " This writer has a good sense of logic and order, but needs a stronger vocabulary and greater skill in handling language.

Despite the 3 rating, supporting evidence in this paper is **not** flawed or weak. Remember, no paper fits **all scoring criteria.** It is still necessary to exercise personal judgment. In this case, snappy style would have earned this otherwise satisfactory paper a 4.

UNIT 6: PRIMARY TRAIT SCORING PRACTICE (PAPERS S–W)

Unit 6 contains five papers, S–W. Score all five for the primary trait of **persuasiveness,** according to the guidelines given. After scoring, compare your scores with those suggested by the author. Remember, do not turn to the **Rationale** section until you have finished scoring papers S through W.

Primary trait scoring generally takes 2-5 minutes per paper. Take your time. But if you are consistently taking longer than five minutes, you may be deliberating too much, or you may not be sufficiently familiar with the Scoring Guide.

NOTE: If for any reason you think you may wish to reuse these materials, or share them with a colleague, we suggest you make copies of student responses before scoring.

PAPER S SCORE: _____

Dear Chairman Brown,

The 12-month school year might be a good idea for some but it is not for everyone. Some students need extra help. It is fine for them to go to school all year, but they get the help they need through summer school. Why impose this requirement on everyone?

The 12-month school year is not needed. In many cases we spend days reviewing old material or just having discussions. There is not enough work to fill 12 months. Teachers would have to stretch the work out even farther and all of us will get bored. I feel this idea should be kept in mind for a future time and should not be acted on now.

Thank you

Pat Smith

PAPER T SCORE: _____

Dear Mr. Brown,

The 12-month school year strikes me as heartless. I suppose you will say the Board of Directors has the student's best interests as heart, but that is only your side of the picture. What do we have to lose? Recreation time, for one thing. We sit in the classroom all year and grow pale and aneamic. We need to get out in the sun and fresh air in the summer. What about our social life? In school we just see the same old people day after day. This is not too stimulating. Our minds can get stale from this lack of activity. It is clear you will only defeet your own purpose with the 12-month school year by making things worse than ever. I am sure if you and the other board of directors discuss my ideas you will eventually come to see that I am correct. You may consider this my protest to the 12-month school year.

Respectfully yours,

Pat Smith

PAPER U SCORE: _____

Dear Mr. Brown,

There are two sides to your idea. Personally I like school and will not mind coming ever day. Not all my friends will feel the same way.

To see the other side, you have not made clear your posishion on vacashions. To be spesific, do you plan to have any? If there are no vacashions 12 months could be a long time. This could effect my vote. I can see we maybe do not need the whole 3 months every summer like we have had. But this change is too drastick. Think of a compromize so everyone can be happy. Then you will get my suport.

Thanks

Sincerely – Pat Smith

PAPER V SCORE: _____

Some of the most intelligent people in history have been self-taught. You do not need to attend school to be well educated. A wealth of information awaits us in books. For the man who can read all doors to knowledge and wisdom are opened. Most people learn to read in school, but even this is unnecessary. A person can learn from his parents or peers or even on his own if he has to. School is really a small, insignificant part of a person's educational experience. Reading, on the other hand, can bring knowledge, joy and satisfaction throughout a person's life.

PAPER W SCORE: _____

Dear Chairman Brown,

My suggestion to you is give up on the 12-month school year. It's an idea nobody but the Board will like. They do not have to attend school so they do not understand how it is for us.

Our hours are long and the work is very hard. By the time June comes along we are worn to nubs. Not to mention the teachers who must suffer along with us. We need our summers off. We can't learn if we are too tired to see straight.

But here's the real point; school costs money. Every time we open the doors, there go some more taxpayer's dollars. It costs money to buy heat, books, food, lights, and teacher's salaries. Where will it end. You cannot consider yourself a real leader of the community if you let things like this happen.

There are more important things for the board to deal with. We need better parking facilities, better pay so we can hire some more teachers and more uptodate equipment for our gym and track team. These things won't wait. Therefore, do not waste our time and money with ideas nobody believes in. Take my advice; you will not be sorry.

Sincerely,
Your faithful student,

Pat Smith

PLEASE TURN THE PAGE FOR SUGGESTED SCORES AND RATIONALES.

UNIT 6: SUGGESTED SCORES AND RATIONALES (PAPERS S–W)

PAPER S Suggested Score: 3

Rationale: S takes a clear stand ("The 12-month school year is not needed"), but the arguments to support this stand are weak: i.e., it would be too boring, not everyone needs extra help, there's not enough schoolwork to fill a year. These opinions are not backed with evidence, nor are they presented effectively. The opening and closing lines are weak and ambivalent. Overall, the paper lacks zip and style. (Some raters will likely score this paper as a strong 2.)

_____ **Agree**
_____ **Disagree**
Comments:

PAPER T Suggested Score: 3

Rationale: Here's a paper with a good strong opening that loses its punch about midway through and never regains momentum. The image of "pale, anemic" students deprived of "stimulating" social life adds a touch of humor, but isn't really a sound argument. T, like S, finds school tedious – fine, but you can't effectively structure an argument around one opinion. The last few sentences (beginning with "It is clear . . .") add virtually nothing. (Again, some raters may see this paper as a strong 2.)

_____ **Agree**
_____ **Disagree**
Comments:

PAPER U Suggested Score: 1/2

Rationale: Just what is U's position? Who can say? This faltering little letter vacillates enough to make the reader dizzy. U says, in effect, if you really want the 12-month school year, ok, only don't expect my friends to like it; on the other hand, if there aren't going to be any vacations I may change my mind (but I'm not saying how), so meanwhile, come up with another idea and maybe I'll let you know how I feel. In short, U is polite, but vague. If you considered "Personally I like school and will not mind coming every day" a clear statement of position, you probably scored this paper 2; if not, you probably found little to elevate it above the ambiguous 1 level.

NOTE: U is a muddler, but not a totally incompetent writer. This is a poor piece of ***persuasion*** *to be sure. The vocabulary is flat and the organization inept. Sentence structure isn't too bad, though, and there's a nice conversational quality to the style. Suppose you were scoring the paper holistically. Would your score be different?*

_____ **Agree**

_____ **Disagree**

Comments:

PAPER V Suggested Score: 0

Rationale: Here's a thoughtful, intelligent little essay that has only one real problem: it doesn't address the question asked. Remember that zero is not an indicator of quality. V is an unusually competent ninth grade writer who simply didn't respond to the test item. In a large-scale assessment, the usual procedure is to give students like V a chance to retake the exam. In the classroom, of course, you can be more flexible. You may, for instance, even give students the chance (occasionally) to write off-topic if they choose. Remember, however, that you cannot properly score such papers using guidelines developed for a specific item.

_____ **Agree**

_____ **Disagree**

Comments:

PAPER W Suggested Score: 4

Paper W has much to commend it: forceful diction, good organization and paragraphing, reasonably good sentence structure, and perhaps most exciting of all, some real content to support a strong stand. ("It's an idea nobody but the Board will like.") W doesn't just cite opinions; he/she gives **reasons.** This is refreshing. There are some flaws: a few cliches (e.g., "worn to nubs" – though the effect is more humorous than annoying), misuse of the semicolon in the third paragraph (partially redeemed by correct use in the last sentence), faulty word choice ("It costs money to buy . . . teacher's [sic] salaries"). In general, though, W's ability to stick tenaciously to the central idea and to maintain interest through originality, style and sound thinking are unmatched by any other sample in this unit. W's tone is occasionally a little impudent; if you were put off by that, you probably rated this paper a 3.

_____ **Agree**
_____ **Disagree**
Comments:

SUMMARY

Take a few moments to review your scores on papers S through W. If your scores did not differ by more than one point in any case, you are in virtual agreement with the author, and are probably ready to begin constructing exercises for classroom use.

If you disagreed significantly (i.e., a discrepancy of two or three points) with just one score, you can probably chalk that disagreement off to individuality. If, however, you disagreed significantly with the suggested scores in more than one case, recheck any comments you noted in the **Rationale** section, then ask yourself the following questions:

1. Did I allow myself time to become thoroughly familiar with the Scoring Guide before beginning to rate papers?

2. In scoring, did I read each paper through thoroughly rather than just skimming?

3. Did I refer to the Guide frequently?

4. Did I remember to score each paper strictly on **persuasiveness** without letting other factors (e.g., spelling) influence my judgments?

   NOTE: A letter with lots of spelling errors probably isn't quite as persuasive as a letter with flawless spelling, other factors being reasonably equal. To the extent that any factor, like ***organization,*** *influences a primary trait like* ***persuasiveness,*** *that factor must somehow (directly or indirectly) be considered in scoring.*

5. Did I let myself be overly influenced by the writer's viewpoint or vice versa (that is, downgrading a paper because I disagreed with the writer)?

6. Did I remember to place myself in the position of Chairman Brown, realizing that the basic tenet of primary trait scoring holds that all writing is done in terms of an audience?

   REMEMBER: The main question to ask yourself here is, would this letter persuade me (as Chairman Brown) to adopt this student's position on the 12-month school year? If one were to translate the answer into a score, the results would look something like this:
   4 paper = Yes, definitely (would persuade me)
   3 paper = Yes, probably
   2 paper = No, probably not
   1 paper = No, definitely not

Additional practice

If you would like additional practice, please turn to Unit 7, page 50, and score papers AA through EE. As in the preceding units, suggested scores and rationales are provided.

UNIT 7: PRIMARY TRAIT SCORING PRACTICE (PAPERS AA–EE)

Score the following five papers for the primary trait of **persuasiveness**, using the Scoring Guide provided for Unit 6. Enter all scores before checking the suggested scores and rationales that appear at the end of this unit.

PAPER AA SCORE: _____

Dear Mr. Brown,

As ideas go this one is not too bad. I figure if we go to school for 12 months we can finish up about three years sooner and be ready to start our lives when we are about 15 years old (14 for some). It will be a long hawl but worth it at the end when we are free, FREE, **FREE!**

Pat Smith

PAPER BB SCORE: _____

Dear Mr. Brown

No to your plan It will never work Noone lakes your idea that much we do not lake shcool that much so it is a bad idea this is my opinon and my friends too

Pat Smith

PAPER DD SCORE: _____

Dear Mr. Brown,

Have you considered the consequences of your actions? A 12-month school year could create alot of unrest in students and teachers. Don't you take a vacation? I am sure the Board of Directors does not meet the year around. We are only asking for those same privileges. We need your support in order to maintain our mental health. If you create to much discontent in the schools people will cease to learn. The system will disintigrate around us. Teachers will resent students and we will be the losers. Its not too late. Reconsider your plan and give up the 12-month school year. In the end we will all benefit.

Sincerelv vours

Pat Smith

PAPER EE SCORE: _____

Dear Chairperson Brown:

Basically I would say the answer to your suggestion is: no. Why do I say this? For two reasons. First of all, nobody (except a few kids who love school) want to go to school all year long. You will have a lot of disipline problems when you try inforsing this rule. Second, when people do not like a rule they tend to go against it and pretty soon nobody obeys that rule anymore. You will be sitting in this great big school all by yourself if you try to make people go to school when they don't want to. I'm sure you were thinking of our welfair: but this idea is really the pits.

Thanks anyway,

Pat Smith

PLEASE TURN THE PAGE FOR SUGGESTED SCORES AND RATIONALES.

UNIT 7: SUGGESTED SCORES AND RATIONALES (PAPERS AA–EE)

PAPER AA Suggested Score: 2

Rationale: It's pretty clear that AA likes the idea of the 12-month school year, albeit for a questionable reason. This letter is short and to the point. There's certainly no ambiguity, and there is a healthy dose of enthusiasm. However, AA makes no real effort to **persuade**; he/she seems to accept the 12-month year as inevitable. There's no logic, no strong content: in short, no argument – just a verbal nod.

_____ **Agree**
_____ **Disagree**
Comments:

PAPER BB Suggested Score: 1

Rationale: BB lacks even the limited persuasive power of AA, who had at least a reason for his/her opinion. BB's "logic" is roughly "I dislike this idea; therefore, it's a bad idea." Far from being persuasive, this says practically nothing. Poor sentence structure and mechanics don't help matters. (Compare the readability of AA.)

_____ **Agree**
_____ **Disagree**
Comments:

PAPER CC Suggested Score: 4

Rationale: If one were to seek a textbook model response to Item 2, this would be it. The logic is sound, with two good reasons provided for opposing the 12-month school year: loss of time with family and loss of travel/work time. The language is bright and sophisticated, the tone businesslike yet sincere. It is hard to imagine any Chairman of the Board being unmoved by so cogent an argument as CC presents.

_____ **Agree**
_____ **Disagree**
Comments:

PAPER DD Suggested Score: 3

Rationale: DD offers only one main argument: the threat of unrest among students and teachers. That argument is presented clearly enough, but one senses that DD lacks the vocabulary and rhetorical skills to convey the full force of his/her emotion. The letter is redundant too. The notions of "unrest," "discontent," "people will cease to learn," "the system will disintegrate" are little more than echoes of one another. Also, the tone here is a little accusatory. If you were put off by that, you may have rated DD a 2.

_____ **Agree**
_____ **Disagree**
Comments:

PAPER EE Suggested Score: 2

Rationale: EE certainly enjoys using colons. Unfortunately, neither this nor any other rhetorical device rescues this paper from mediocrity. EE promises the reader two arguments, but delivers only one in two packages. And even the one argument – that nobody will like the 12-month school year – is weak and certainly unoriginal. The letter disintegrates into nothing more than emotional fuzziness disguised as logic at the end (i.e., "You will be sitting . . . all by yourself"). EE's reasoning is unsophisticated, unrealistic, and above all unpersuasive.

_____ **Agree**
_____ **Disagree**
Comments:

TO SEE HOW A RESPONSE TO ITEM 1 MIGHT BE SCORED USING THE PRIMARY TRAIT APPROACH (VERSUS HOLISTIC), PLEASE TURN THE PAGE.

COMPARING SCORING APPROACHES: HOLISTIC VS. PRIMARY TRAIT

The following examples are included to illustrate how a response originally scored holistically might be scored using the primary trait approach. The two responses shown here are taken from chapter II on holistic scoring, and the original holistic scores are shown here for comparative purposes.

In addition, these responses have been scored according to the Primary Trait Scoring Guide presented in Chapter IV. Readers are asked to keep in mind that these guidelines were developed for use with Item 2, and are used unmodified with Item 1 for illustrative purposes only. It is always best to develop scoring guidelines in conjunction with the item for which they are intended. (For the reader's convenience, Item 1 is reprinted here.)

ITEM 1 (Reprinted from page 8)

Toby loved to hike in the woods. One day when he was hiking, he found a bird with an injured wing. Toby took the bird home, set his wing, and took care of him. He named the bird Mike. Soon Mike got better, and he could have flown away, but Toby kept him in a small cage. Toby knew the bird was ready to be free, but he liked Mike so much he decided to keep him as a pet.

Do you think Toby made the right decision? Write out your answer on this page. State clearly whether you think it was a good idea for Toby to keep Mike. Then explain your reasons as completely as you can. Your response will be scored on how **persuasive** it is.

PAPER G (Reprinted from page 15)

I know from my own experience just how Toby feels. Once a bird flew in to our livingroom window and was knocked unconsious. For a whole day it looked like the bird would die. When it came to it wouldn't eat and I had to feed it with a eye dropper. I kept it in a box in the garage. Then one day as I was taking it some thing to eat I discovered the box was empty! My beautiful pet bird had flown away never to return! At first I wished I had never seen this bird; then I would not have to feed so sad!

But then I realized that at least I had helped the bird get well and that was better than having it for a pet. I would of kept the bird if I could, but it would have been wrong. So thinking about my own experience, Toby should let the bird go free.

Suggested Scores

Holistic: 3 (See page 16 for rationale.)

Primary Trait: 2

Primary Trait Rationale: G takes a long time getting to the point, and this delay damages persuasiveness. G has empathy, but strays from the track a great deal discussing personal experience. This paper could have easily earned a 3 had G presented the main idea first (i.e., "Toby should let the bird go free"), then backed it with a personal anecdote. Order is critical to persuasiveness.

Paper H (Reprinted from page 15)

Toby has done a fine thing in caring for this helpless bird. Without his assistance, the bird would probably have become the prey of a fox or hawk. (What kind of bird is Mike anyway — it doesn't say.) But then Toby undid all the good he had done by deciding to make a pet of a bird that belongs free in the skies. It would have been better to let the bird die. Does that sound cruel? It isn't. Man should not interfear with Nature. At least Toby should have known enough to release the bird once he had done all he could do to help it. So no, I cannot say Toby has done the right thing. A person who knows enough to help a bird with a broken wing should also know enough to release it once the wing is strong again.

Suggested Scores

Holistic: 4 (See page 16 for rationale.)

Primary Trait: 3/4

Primary Trait Rationale: H has a strong tone of conviction that lends it great persuasivness. One could argue that the main thesis — i.e., that man should not interfere with nature — would be better presented first. Also, the second to last sentence, intended as a clarification, really adds nothing but wordiness. H's contention that the bird would be better off dead than caged is somewhat startling, especially when so starkly expressed. H is forthright and strictly to the point: a no-nonsence kind of writer. As in G's case, slight reordering could have boosted persuasiveness, but overall, this is a fine effort.

NOTE: A similar comparison between holistic and analytical scoring appears at the end of Chapter III. Users are encouraged to try this kind of comparison as a classroom exercise, to see how scores can sometimes differ with different scoring approaches, and to discuss the resultant meaning of those scores.

THIS CONCLUDES THE CHAPTER ON PRIMARY TRAIT SCORING. THE FOLLOWING CHAPTER OFFERS SUGGESTIONS FOR CLASSROOM USE.

CHAPTER V: Suggestions for Classroom Use

USING WRITING ASSESSMENT SCORING APPROACHES TO TEACH WRITING

Through the preceding chapters you have had a chance to experiment with three methods of scoring student papers: holistic, analytical and primary trait. Once you are comfortable in applying each of these methods, you can use what you know to enhance classroom instruction. The following suggestions indicate a few ways in which this might be done.

The emphasis here is on student involvement and the use of writing assessment to teach writing skills. Some teachers may also want to use one or all of these methods as a part of student evaluation. That's fine.* Remember, however, that students can derive great benefit from an opportunity to act as critics. By helping students learn to apply the principles of these three scoring methods, you can give them many of the skills they need to write well.

A Word About Grading

Educators are cautioned against using the methods described in this handbook – particularly holistic and primary trait scoring – as a **sole** basis for assigning grades. There are several reasons for this.

First, depending on how classroom exercises are structured, students may not receive enough feedback to justify assignment of a letter grade. In a typical classroom discussion, certain papers are bound to receive more thorough analysis than others. Further, you as an instructor may not gain sufficient information on which to base a grade. It is one thing to rank order students on the basis of, say, three of four holistic writing exercises. It is quite another thing to use those same exercises to determine whether individual students have mastered five or ten basic skills.**

Second – and more important – by asking students to actually score papers, you are making them editors and critics. This is a role students often enjoy immensely, but more so if the threat of an impending grade is eliminated. You will have the greatest success if you create an open atmosphere in which students feel free to comment and criticize writing (theirs and others') knowing that no formal grade hangs in the balance.

Third, ratings on a four-point scale do not always convert readily to letter grades. An analytical scoring system which incorporates five or six traits carefully delineated through explicit criteria may provide an adequate and appropriate basis for assigning grades. Indeed, of the three scoring approaches discussed in this handbook, analytical scoring provides the most specific information. But primary trait scoring, as we have seen, pinpoints only one facet of a student's writing skill; therefore, a grade assigned on that basis cannot be reflective of a student's overall ability.

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*The discussion in Part II of this chapter deals specifically with the use of writing assessment in testing and evaluation.

**Analytical and primary trait scoring will, of course, provide more specific and detailed information than holistic.

An even greater hazard lies in attempting to translate holistic scores into letter grades. As noted earlier, holistic scoring is a normative system in which each rating reflects a paper's relative ranking within the group, quite apart from that paper's individual merits. If students (as a group) do exceptionally well on a given assignment, then even the 2s and 1s may be quite readable papers. Conversely, if students (as a group) respond poorly to an assignment, even the 4s may be mediocre.

The three scoring approaches can all be used quite successfully as a means of discovering students' strengths and weaknesses. Used in this way, they are an excellent asset to an established program for student evaluation. In most cases, however, teachers will find these methods inappropriate as shortcuts to conventional grading practices.

Adapting the Author's Suggestions

The suggestions presented here are designed to suit a range of teaching styles and student needs. Some will certainly be more appropriate for your students' grade level and range of skills than others.

Keep in mind that these suggestions are only guidelines. You are encouraged to use your imagination in refining and adapting them as desirable.

SUGGESTION 1: Scoring Papers

Instruct students in any or all of the three scoring methods, then ask them to score the sample student responses provided in this handbook, using the range finders or scoring criteria provided, as appropriate.

Discussion:

- Do students' scores agree with your own?
- Do students' scores agree with those provided by the author?
- If not, what priorities do students reveal in evaluating writing?

SUGGESTION 2: Let Students Write

Give students a chance to respond to items 1 and 2. Score results using the range finders (for holistic)* or criteria (for analytical and primary trait) provided.

Xeroxing all papers for students can be cumbersome. Consider using an overhead projector in scoring and discussing papers.

SUGGESTION 3: Whose Paper Is It?

Encourage students to "take the risk" of remaining anonymous by omitting names from papers. Criticism is more honest if no one knows whose paper is under discussion. Also try

- Including a paper of your own for analysis.
- Encouraging students to "disguise" telltale handwriting (distinctive handwriting is a sure clue to identity).
- Allowing two comparable sections (e.g., two classes of freshmen) to score each other's papers.

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*If you prefer, you can select range finders from among class papers. Keep in mind, though, that selecting range finders is time consuming because it requires reading **all** the papers from a small class (50 or under). For a more complete discussion of how to select range finders, see Appendix B.

SUGGESTION 4: Keep It Lively

Don't let students sit by as observers while you illuminate the flaws and merits of each paper. This should come from them. Ask students to be very explicit about what makes a 4 paper a 4, what makes a 3 better than a 2, and so on.

- Ask students to comment on the benefits/disadvantages of having many "critics" as opposed to just one (i.e., the instructor).

SUGGESTION 5: Good Items vs. Bad

Ask students to do a critique of Items 1 and 2.

- Are directions clear?
- Is the item stimulating? Is it fun to write about?
- Is the item bias-free? That is, is there anyone for whom the item would be inappropriate because of age, sex, or culture? If so, how could the item be amended to meet their needs?

Compare the following sample items to the originals.

Item 1

One day a boy found an injured bird. He took the bird home and made a pet out of him. How do you feel about this?

Item 2

What if someone said you had to have school all year around? Write a letter stating your views about this.

SUGGESTION 6: Item Writing

Give students a chance to write original items, using whatever guidelines come out of the discussion from Suggestion 5. As a minimum, items should be –

1. **Clear and complete,** with unambiguous directions, so that respondents understand all that will be expected of them, and are aware of how their responses will be judged.

2. **Bias-free,** so that all students to whom the item is directed will have an equal chance to respond well.

3. **Stimulating,** so that respondents are motivated to do their best.

SUGGESTION 7: Item Testing

Select one or two of the best items from Suggestion 6 for students to write on. Score results by whatever method seems most appropriate. In scoring, be sure to note the relationship between the quality of the **item** and the quality of the **response.**

SUGGESTION 8: Rating Outside Writing

A good writer is a skillful critic. Once students are familiar with the three scoring methods, have them try their evaluative skills on a piece of outside writing:

- Newspaper/magazine clipping
- Student writing from another class
- Ph.D. thesis
- Advertising copy
- Song lyrics
- Business letter
- Portion of novel or poem
- Sample of your own writing
- Movie script
- Script from play
- Papers from other classes (science, history, psych, sociology)

SUGGESTION 9: Getting Into Real Writing

A common complaint – among students and teachers alike – is that writing assignments aren't "real." Why not give students a chance to do some **real** writing – say a letter to the local newspaper editor? Score responses for format, tone, content, whatever – mail the best responses in. Getting a letter printed in the paper can provide greater reinforcement than any letter grade.

SUGGESTION 10: More Real Writing

As a followup to Suggestion 9, try these exercises in "real" writing:

- Find samples of actual college/scholarship applications. Many require a short essay. Responding to these – and getting reactions from peers – can be very worthwhile practice.

- Have students draft letters of application in response to actual job advertisements. Let classmates take the role of "employers" in evaluating letters to see who "gets the job."

- Encourage students to write and mail in letters criticizing or commending a TV show in terms of content, performance, story level. Ask students to share any responses that are received.

Students themselves may have additional suggestions on "real" writing.

SUGGESTION 11: The Business Letter

Mastering proper business letter format is a stumbling block for lots of students. Primary trait analysis provides a natural vehicle for teaching this form. But be **careful**; don't go too fast. Score letters just on format first. Later, if you wish, take an analytical approach by adding more factors: content, tone, organization, style.

SUGGESTION 12: Discuss the Factors

The materials in this handbook deal with three factors – **ideas, wording** and **organization** – that might be scored analytically.

- Ask students to identify others.

Important: It will be necessary to develop new scoring criteria for any new traits that are to be scored. You will find this process (as with range finders) simpler and faster if you develop the criteria yourself, though you may want to involve students in discussing and refining criteria. If you choose to involve students in the development of criteria, prepare to spend a minimum of 2-3 class hours per trait.

- Score some writing samples, using the factors identified.
- Discussion: Are some factors more important to good writing than others?

SUGGESTION 13: What About Mechanics?

Even for experienced raters, the development and application of scoring criteria for rating **mechanics** is difficult because there are countless factors to be considered. (It can take pages of criteria just to cover punctuation!) Therefore, it is NOT RECOMMENDED that you attempt to score mechanics using either analytical or primary trait scoring methods.*

SUGGESTION 14: Finding Other Primary Traits

Ask students to identify the primary (that is, most **important**) trait in

- A letter to the editor
- A biography
- A resume
- A letter of application
- A recipe
- A chemistry textbook
- A movie script
- A radio ad
- A news broadcast (script)

Provide examples and score them.

Or – turn the exercise around, and ask students to name a piece of writing in which the following would be the primary trait:

- Style
- Organization
- Tone
- Wording
- Clarity
- Ideas
- Originality
- Insight
- Accuracy
- Any others . . . ?

*The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has developed a coded system for scoring mechanics in student writing samples. For information, contact NAEP, 1860 Lincoln Street, Suite 300, Denver, Colorado 80295.

SUGGESTION 15: What Is a "Primary" Trait?

So-called "primary" traits are sometimes umbrella terms that encompass component traits. For instance, **organization** may be part **logic**, part **word order**, part **completeness**, and so on.

Dissecting such umbrella terms can help students understand what concepts like "organization" are all about, and how such qualities can be achieved in writing.

Try dissecting –

- Persuasiveness
- Originality
- Tone
- Syntax
- Diction

Such words, part of the language arts terminology, are often meaningful to students **only** after they are broken into component parts.

SUGGESTION 16: Focusing on Specifics

Holistic, analytical and primary trait scoring methods complement one another when used as part of instruction.

For instance, suppose that through holistic or analytical scoring practice, you find that many students are weak in one area: say, organization. To build skills, concentrate on the factor, scoring for organization as a primary trait. Be sure to use exercises in which organization – or whatever trait you wish students to focus on – is important.

Examples (for organization):

- Set of directions
- Logical argument
- Chronological account

Of course, it isn't necessary for everyone to do the same thing all the time. Let students identify their own weaknesses. Then score one batch of papers for organization, one for wording, and so on.

SUGGESTION 17: If Students Find Analytical Too Hard

For many students – even for teachers – analytical scoring can be overwhelming at first. It is demanding because it requires total concentration and rigorous application of explicit criteria.

To simplify the process a little try this:

1. Remember to have students score one factor at a time. That is, if ten papers are to be scored, review all ten for organization, then for wording, and so on.

2. Teach one factor at a time and do not go on until students feel ready. Gradually add others until students feel comfortable rating a single paper for two, three or more factors (some students will find it difficult to go beyond three). No matter how many factors are scored, however, remember to score them one at a time – never simultaneously.

SUGGESTION 18: Helping the "Straight A" Student

For some students, the prospect of failure is intimidating – almost incapacitating. Help students understand that everyone, including the best students will occasionally receive low ratings.

Students with consistently high expectations may cope better with what they perceive as negative feedback if

- Ratings are regarded only as indicators of relative achievement (e.g., "This paper has merit but does not do as much with organization as this one . . . ")
- Ratings are **not** translated directly into letter grades.
- Instructors are open enough to submit their own writing for analysis – even when it means accepting an occasional low rating gracefully!

SUGGESTION 19: Comparing Approaches

Students who have had a chance to try all three scoring approaches (i.e., holistic, analytical and primary trait) are in a good position to make some comparisons. Here are some brief summaries to launch the discussions:

Primary trait scoring presumes that writing is done in terms of an audience, and that successful writing will have the desired effect upon that audience thanks to its excellence with regard to a specific factor: namely, the primary trait.

Analytical scoring presumes that there are a handful of universal traits important to virtually any piece of writing in any context, and that thorough analysis demands attention to each of these factors.

Holistic scoring presumes that writing possesses some elusive quality that transcends factor-by-factor analysis: in short, that the whole is always more than the sum of its parts. Therefore, any piece of writing is best judged for its overall effect.

SUGGESTION 20: Getting Fresh Ideas

Consider forming a discussion group with colleagues to

- Evaluate student papers
- Talk over classroom adaptations
- Write and review new items
- Develop scoring criteria

NOTE TO THE READER

We hope this list of suggestions provides a good beginning for you in adapting scoring methods for classroom use. As you implement these suggestions, new ideas will undoubtedly occur to you. In addition, you will likely find ways to modify these original suggestions to make them work better for you.

When you find an idea that works well, won't you let us hear from you? With your help, we can keep our list of classroom suggestions as up-to-date and complete as possible. We hope to issue expanded and refined versions of this list in the future.

USING WRITING TESTS AND TEST RESULTS IN THE CLASSROOM

This discussion is directed toward the educator who wishes to use writing assessment in testing or as a part of student evaluation. Please keep in mind that writing items used for evaluative purposes – especially when performance affects a student's progress, grade or status – should be carefully developed, reviewed and pilot tested to ensure appropriateness, quality and freedom from bias.

TESTING AND DECISION MAKING

Tests can serve various purposes in the classroom. One important purpose is to facilitate educational decision making. A test should not be administered, therefore, until any decisions that rest on the results of that test have been clearly articulated.

To illustrate how writing tests can help teachers make educational decisions, each of eight contexts is described here in terms of the decision to be made and the type of information needed to make that decision. These descriptions are followed by a chart showing which of the three scoring approaches described in this handbook can provide the best information for use in each context.

USING TESTS TO MANAGE INSTRUCTION

Diagnosis. Teachers often use tests and other performance indicators to track each student's level of development, diagnosing skills already mastered and identifying skills yet to be learned. Direct writing assessment via writing samples can provide much diagnostic information, thus simplifying student grouping or instructional scheduling. Diagnostic information gathered **over time** using writing samples can provide a partial basis for grading or communicating progress to parents.

Placement. Educators must determine a student's level of development in order to place that student at the instructional level best suited to his/her skills. Writing skill tests, along with grades and previous courses completed, can be used to rank order and properly place students.

Guidance and Counseling. In deciding their future educational or vocational activities, students need to know how their writing skill compares to that of other students with whom they could compete. Writing test results can help students, their parents and their guidance counselors answer students' typical questions: Should I pursue advanced training in a postsecondary educational program in which writing is a key element? In which school or job am I most likely to be successful? Though test scores should never serve as the sole basis for answering such questions, they can play a valuable role.

USING TESTS TO SELECT STUDENTS

Admissions. In times of limited resources, it is not uncommon to have more candidates for a program than program openings. When this happens, educators must decide who will be admitted. Selection decisions most affect those at either end of the skill continuum. That is, more able students are selected for inclusion in advanced writing programs, while less able students are selected for remedial writing programs. Writing tests can be used to facilitate such selection.

Certification. Tests can be designed to verify and document a student's knowledge or mastery of required skills. Teachers might use writing tests to certify mastery of beginning writing skills for purposes of grading or promotion. District and state administrators might use minimum writing competency tests as criteria for high school graduation.

USING TESTS TO EVALUATE PROGRAMS

Formative Evaluation. In formative program evaluation, teachers attempt to determine which instructional activities are functioning as intended and which need refinement. By testing students at periodic intervals in the course of a writing program, teachers can determine which skills have been mastered and adjust instruction accordingly. Further testing to check the effectiveness of any program modifications may be desirable too.

Summative Evaluation. Summative evaluation reveals a program's overall merit, and suggests whether that program should be continued or terminated. Tests designed to assess students' performance on final learning outcomes are an important part of such an evaluation. As with formative evaluation, multiple test administrations are common. Tests may be given immediately prior to and following instruction to document program impact.

Survey Assessment. Survey assessment refers to the collection of group achievement data to determine general educational development in any area, including writing. Information may be gathered by administering a writing test to a carefully selected random sample of students in the target population. Survey assessment is often cyclical, so that test reviewers can examine trends in writing skill over time. This information is of particular value to the public, as well as to building-, district- or state-level administrators who allocate resources by need.

SELECTING SCORING PROCEDURES

Selecting a scoring procedure is an important part of assessment planning since this decision is closely related to the purpose for assessment. Though it is possible to conceptualize instances within each of the eight educational assessment contexts in which any given scoring approach could be employed, the "best" approach will be that which provides the kind of information needed, at the correct level of specificity and in the most cost efficient manner.

To illustrate, **diagnosis** of individual student strengths and weaknesses demands the level of specificity provided through analytical or primary trait scoring. **Placement and guidance,** on the other hand, may only require holistic ratings because the goal here is simply to rank students on a continuum of writing skill. Because holistic scoring is faster (and therefore more economical) than other hand scoring methods, it would be the most cost effective approach in this context.

Selection for admission may only require a holistic ranking of students, while **certification** may be done through holistic ratings or analytical or primary trait scoring, depending on the specificity of the competencies to be certified.

Holistic scoring procedures are well suited to the relatively broad, unfocused nature of large-scale **survey assessment.** However, analytical scoring may serve as well if the desire for individual data justifies the additional time and expense.

Scoring procedures for **formative evaluation** depend on the specificity of the enabling and terminal objectives that guide instruction. If general writing proficiency is the program goal, analytical scoring may be selected. However, if instruction focuses on situation-specific rhetorical skills, primary trait scoring may be most appropriate. In most instances, formative evaluation demands more specific information that holistic scoring provides.

With **summative evaluation,** holistic assessment may provide sufficient data to judge program viability. However, if stated program goals subdivide writing skill into component parts, analytical scoring may be appropriate. Since instructional programs in writing deal with writing of many types, for many purposes, primary trait scoring will have limited value in this context.

The relationship between decision and scoring procedure is summarized in the following table.

WRITING ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES AS A FUNCTION OF ASSESSMENT CONTEXT

Context	Decision to be Made	Assessment Procedure: Holistic	Analytical	Primary Trait
Diagnosis	Determine skills mastered		X*	X
Placement	Match student to level of instruction	X	X	
Guidance	Rank students for educational planning	X		
Admission	Rank examinees for selection into programs	X	X	
Certification	Determine mastery of specific competencies		X	X
Formative Evaluation	Determine parts of instructional program in need of revision		X	X
Summative Evaluation	Determine program viability	X	X	
Survey Assessment	Check status of student educational development	X		

NOTE TO THE READER

We hope this handbook has been useful to you, and that you feel confident now in introducing scoring techniques into classroom instruction. As noted in the Preface, this handbook can be used alone or in conjunction with a workshop on scoring methods (see Appendix F, page 93 for sample agendas). If you are interested in such a workshop, please contact:

Richard Stiggins
CAPT Coordinator

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
300 S.W. Sixth Avenue
Portland, Oregon 97204
(503) 248-6800

To check what you have learned, we invite you to take the posttest on page 69 , and compare your score with that you obtained on the pretest, page 1 . Answers are provided in Appendix G, page 95 .

*Indicates appropriateness of approach for the context specified.

POSTTEST

Test of Writing Assessment Knowledge

NAME: _____ **SCORES:**
_____ **BEFORE TRAINING**
_____ **AFTER TRAINING**

1. List the major steps in the writing assessment process.
2. List three different approaches to scoring samples of student writing.
3. Name the scoring approach that relies on an overall impression of the quality of a given piece of writing.
4. Name the scoring approach based on the premise that all writing is done to communicate with a specific audience.
5. Which scoring approach takes the most time to use?
6. Which scoring approach takes the least time to use?
7. Which scoring approaches are based on prespecified performance criteria?
8. If you wanted to evaluate specifically how well students follow proper format in writing a business letter, which scoring approach would you use?
9. Which scoring approach provides the most information about specific strengths and weaknesses in student writing?
10. What is a "range finder" paper?
11. Which of the scoring approaches is probably most subject to a "halo effect"?
12. Probably the best way to use writing assessment in the classroom is to show students how you are going to score their papers.

    _____ True
    _____ False

COMPARE YOUR SCORES ON THE PRETEST AND POSTTEST. ANSWERS ARE PROVIDED IN APPENDIX G.

APPENDIX A

Answers to Commonly Asked Questions on Scoring

Achieving agreement with other raters is largely a matter of practice. In addition, however, it requires understanding of the way in which scores are assigned. It may be helpful, therefore, to clarify some of the most commonly raised issues regarding scoring.

1. ***In holistic scoring, must a paper be free of all mechanical errors in order to receive a 4?***

   By no means. Mechanics is an important consideration, but no more important than other factors like style, syntax, word choice and organization. A 4 paper need not be flawless in any of these areas, though in practice most 4s will be excellent in most respects. The relative merit of a 4 paper in holistic scoring depends on the quality of the sample as a whole.

2. ***What if a paper is well written but does not address the topic?***

   In large-scale assessment, a special category is created for papers that are illegible, blank, written in a language other than English, or that address a totally different topic. This category may be assigned a number off the scoring scale (e.g., 7 for a 4-point scale), or may be designated the "zero" (i.e., "no score") category.

   In state exams, students who receive a zero (no score) are usually given a chance to repeat the exercise. This is one option you can use in class too. Remember that you **cannot** score a paper on one topic using range finders or scoring criteria developed for another topic.

3. ***Shouldn't an extremely poor paper receive a zero?***

   Definitely not. No paper, regardless of how poorly written, is ever qualitatively below the 1 level. "Zero," if used at all, denotes a special category as described in response to question 2.

4. ***Are longer papers generally better papers?***

   Raters must take care not to be unduly influenced by length. Though it often happens in practice that skillful, articulate writers do write the most, length in itself is not indicative of quality. A concise, well conceived response may well merit a 4 rating. On the other hand, a wordy paper, weak in content, may deserve only a 1 or 2.

5. ***Is handwriting a reliable indicator of a paper's quality?***

   Generally speaking, no. Handwriting, like length, is a tempting factor on which to base a hasty judgment – especially when raters are tired or bored. However, handwriting is not a reliable indicator of overall quality. Of course, it's O.K. to consider handwriting, along with other factors, provided this decision is made in advance and respondents know what's expected of them.

   In analytical or primary trait scoring systems, handwriting (like any factor) must be noted in the scoring criteria if it is to receive consideration. Similarly, in holistic scoring,

range finders should provide some definite indication of the extent to which handwriting is to influence scores.

See Appendix C for examples of handwritten student responses.

6. *Is a 4 paper always an excellent paper?*

Usually – but not necessarily. In analytical scoring, 4s are generally of high quality because they must meet prespecified criteria. Of course, the quality and completeness of the criteria themselves determine in large part how meaningful scores will actually be.

In primary trait scoring, a paper must also meet prespecified criteria to be judged a 4. However, if only one trait is being evaluated, it is quite possible that a paper which earns a 4 in that category is far from excellent in other respects.

Holistic scoring is more complex. Remember, the range finders on which holistic scores are based are generally drawn from the sample of responses. (Other range finders may be used only if they reflect the general ability level of the respondents.) Theoretically it is possible (though admittedly unlikely) that out of say, 100 persons, no one would provide what could objectively be termed an excellent response. This would most likely happen if the test item were ambiguous or otherwise flawed. In that case, a 4 paper, while one of the better papers in the sample, might not be an excellent paper in its own right. Given a sufficiently large sample of writers with varying abilities, this situation is certainly a remote possibility. However, it could occur with a very small sample – say, 30 students – particularly in a special grouping where students were all, more or less, of similar ability.

Educators planning to adapt holistic scoring for classroom use can minimize the problem by ensuring that items are of high quality, and appropriate to students' levels of interest and ability.

7. *What are the qualities of a good writing assessment item?*

If you develop your own items for use in class, it's important that you attend carefully to the quality of those items, for inappropriate items cannot be properly scored.

First, be sure items are **complete**. In other words, provide all information that a student needs to write a good response: e.g., names, dates, addresses for letters, key words and descriptions. In all cases, the type of audience to be addressed and purpose for communication should be specified.

Second, write **clear directions.** If length is to be a factor, say so. If you want the student to take a definite stand on an issue, make that clear. Will handwriting count? Let the student know. Be sure with letter items to provide a name and/or title to whom the student should write. Letting students know in advance how papers will be scored (e.g., for persuasiveness) is not cheating. It helps students focus their thinking and makes the experience more instructional. In general, the specificity of instructions should increase along with the specificity of skills to be assessed. In other words, a survey of overall class skills demands less specificity than diagnosis of each student's strengths in, say, structuring a convincing argument.

Third, review all items and revise as necessary to **eliminate potential bias.** Before using any item, ask yourself whether there are any groups to whom the item could be offensive or for whom it might prove unduly difficult. In short, items should be geared to respondents' age and interest level, sex, cultural background and experience. Sexual bias can be particularly difficult to spot. An item which is of greater interest to boys

than girls (or vice versa), or which deals with a subject that one group is likely to know more about, is sexually biased. If you are unsure, students themselves can sometimes offer guidance here.

Finally, make items **interesting.** The only thing worse than responding to a boring item is having to score the mundane responses you'll get. Stimulating items inspire students to do their best.

(See Appendix D for a list of potential items and sources for obtaining additional items.)

8. In holistic scoring, will the number of scores at each level follow a bell curve?

Given a sufficiently large sample and range of abilities, yes. As a general rule, expect large numbers of 2s and 3s, relatively fewer 1s and 4s.

If you are consistently scoring a large percentage of papers 4 (or 1), one of several things is probably happening:

- Your level 4 range finder paper is not truly representative; probably, it's just a strong 3. Or (in the case of all 1s), your 2, 3 and 4 range finders are not representative. More likely, you have taken the three **single best** papers from the class and mistakenly labeled them representative of a larger group of papers. Ideally, the level 4 range finder should represent a small group of papers at the top of the scoring scale, the level 1 ranger finder, a small group of papers at the lower end of the scoring scale.

OR –

- Your students are so close to one another in ability (at least on a given item) that you are not getting a real range of responses.

OR –

- Your item is not challenging the more capable students; thus you are getting "artificial" 4s that really exemplify mediocre effort. Or (in the case of all 1s), the item is so difficult that even the best students cannot respond well.

The bell curve should be a general expectation, not a goal to strive for, however. Score as you see fit, without aiming for a specific number of 4s, 3s and so on. You won't get a perfect bell every time.

9. Can primary trait analysis cover more than one trait?

Yes. Usually, however, one trait is deemed the **most** important to a given piece of writing and thus is termed the primary trait. Additional traits to be scored are termed secondary and tertiary traits.

If a wide range of traits is to be covered, you might ask yourself whether you are not, in fact, doing analytical scoring.

10. Is it all right to split scores (e.g., 2/3 or 3/4)?

Yes. Occasionally, papers are too close to call. Remember that in writing assessment, scores actually represent a range of achievement along a continuum. Thus, a high 2 may be very close to a low 3.

In assigning a split score, you are in effect, simply expanding the rating scale – you are giving yourself elbow room. A 4-point scale, after all, does not allow for extremely fine discriminations. Some raters are much happier with an 8- or 9-point scale, but such a scale is harder to master, expecially for student raters.

In short, feel free to assign split scores when a decision is really difficult – but do not use it as a crutch to avoid decisions.

11. In scoring papers, why is agreement with other raters necessary or desirable?

Agreement is merely a measure of consistency. If you agree with other raters regarding what score a paper should receive, you have some assurance that your ratings are based on sound criteria or guidelines (e.g., range finder papers). This firm basis makes ratings more meaningful, and more defensible as well. (Certainly students like to think that ratings are not the result of an arbitrary decision.)

The notion of agreement allows for some flexibility in assigning scores, however; no two raters will ever agree totally – nor should they. Writing is not an exact science. Disagreements are important because they often arise when one rater notices something about a paper that another has overlooked. In large-scale assessment, disagreements are generally resolved through a third reading. In the classroom, disagreements can be a fine basis for discussion and learning.

Remember that consistency is particularly desirable if scores are to be used in determining student placement, promotion or grading.

12. Can persons other than experienced language arts personnel be trained to score student papers?

In many cases, yes. In holistic scoring, perhaps the most important qualification is that one be an alert, sensitive reader. It is not necessary to be at home with terms like "poor diction" or "faulty syntax" to recognize muddled writing. Further, raters have range finders to assist them in scoring papers.

The ease with which non-language arts personnel can learn analytical or primary trait scoring depends largely on the nature of the criteria used. If language arts terminology is an integral part of those criteria, the task may prove difficult. There is nothing particularly formidable about the process itself, however.

At the same time, there is little question that experience in reading and rating student papers makes one proficient at the job. Persons who have not taught writing and who are totally unfamiliar with typical student writing generally have more difficulty adapting to a particular scoring approach than do language arts educators.

13. Can range finders be used with analytical or primary trait scoring?

Theoretically, yes. In practice, however, the use of range finders in analytical and primary trait scoring is cumbersome – for two reasons.

First, raters are already dealing with a set of criteria. Having to internalize and refer to both criteria and model papers is time consuming and sometimes downright annoying.

Second, having to identify representative papers for five or six analytical traits, at four distinct levels of performance per trait, would be a difficult, if not utterly mind boggling task. Experienced scorers are too well aware how few papers actually fit neatly into any prespecified category, regardless of how carefully developed criteria may be. (And who would really want 24 range finders to refer to?)

With primary trait scoring, where only one trait is under consideration, the use of range finders is conceivable if the idea really appeals to you. It is doubtful, however, that you will gain much in the way of simplifying scoring. Probably the best advice is this: try it if you must, and see if it works for you.

14. Why must new criteria be developed for use with each item (exercise)?

Ideally, a teacher or other test developer writes an item to measure a particular skill or set of skills. The criteria for evaluating responses must be explicit enough to reflect whether the skill(s) the test developer/teacher wanted to measure have been demonstrated. Only highly specific criteria, developed in conjunction with a given item, will do the job. To see why, consider this example.

Suppose one wanted to know whether students could organize information well, and to measure this skill administered the following test item:

> **SAMPLE ITEM**
> Write instructions for baking an angle food cake. Be sure to include all steps and list them in the proper order. Begin with assembling ingredients and end with serving the cake.

Now suppose that raters were asked to score responses using the following general criteria:

4 = well organized
3 = quite well organized
2 = fairly well organized
1 = poorly organized

These criteria, which seem to delineate four levels of performance, are in reality meaningless. Words like "well," "fairly," and "poorly" are highly subjective and open to interpretation. Using such criteria, raters can be expected to achieve little agreement in assigning scores. Moreover, scores will have almost no meaning because the criteria – written to be generalizable to any item measuring organizational skills – are too vague to offer specific information about performance.

Compare the following criteria, written explicitly for use with this item:

4 = Lists all necessary steps in the proper order.
3 = Lists all necessary steps with only minor errors in order.
2 = Omits one or two necessary steps and/or has significant (i.e., the cake would not turn out) errors in order.
1 = Omits more than two necessary steps and/or has such problems with order that one could not follow the directions.

Raters using these criteria would have a far easier time assigning scores, and would be more likely to agree on those scores. The criteria reflect what is asked for in the item; therefore, they are appropriate and fair.

At the same time, these criteria would clearly **not** be suitable for use with another item, even if that item were intended to measure skill in organization. Describing the events that led up to the Civil War, for instance, is quite different stuff from outlining a recipe for angle food, and well developed criteria must respect such differences. In short, good criteria are thorough and explicit, and complement the item for which they are intended.

APPENDIX B

Selection of Range Finders

The Importance of Knowing the Sample

A range finder paper must be so typical of all papers (within the sample) at a given level that virtually all raters would agree on the score assigned to that paper. Only then can a range finder serve as a model upon which to base the assignment of other scores. Finding a "typical" paper takes some doing.

Suppose, for example, that a given sample comprises 40 papers. Joe Rater reads the first paper and finding it to be quite good, assigns it a 4. However, to Joe's surprise, the next half dozen papers are either equal in quality or superior to that first paper. The seventh paper is far superior. By the time Joe has read every paper in the sample, it becomes clear that at least half the papers are as good as or better than the first, about half the papers are not so good as the first. To properly show this relationship, Joe should have assigned that first paper a 3. But the point is, there was no way he could have known that in advance. Only by reading through the entire sample could Joe see how one paper compared qualitatively to all others.

Holistic scoring is a normative system. In holistic scoring, scores are not based upon preset criteria; they have meaning only in relation to other scores. In other words, a 4 is a 4 not so much by virtue of its being a fine paper in its own right, but by virtue of its being one of the best papers in a given sample. As Joe Rater found out, one can only see where a given paper fits in a sample by being thoroughly familiar with that sample. If there are 1000 papers to read, it is probably sufficient to read a random sample of 10 percent – or about 100 papers – to gain that familiarity. With a very small sample though – say the usual 25-40 papers from one class – it's highly advisable to read the **whole sample** (every paper) before deciding what is or isn't typical. Taking shortcuts can skew the rating scale and render scores meaningless.

The Fastest Method

The easiest method of selecting range finders for classroom use is to pick them yourself from the sample. Simply skim through the 30 or 40 class papers you wish to score, extract the four "typical" papers (i.e., one for each of the four score levels) you wish to have as range finders, and xerox or transcribe to overheads for class use.

An Alternative*

You can also write your own range finders. Do not attempt to do this until you have read through the sample, however; it's important that you be familiar with the range of responses so that your range finders will be representative. The chief advantage in this method is that it allows you to give students specific examples of what to do (4s and 3s) and what not to do (2s and 1s). The particular points you wish to illustrate may or may not occur in the actual sample.

A Longer Method: Class Involvement

If you want to involve your class in the range finder selection process, prepare to spend considerably more time. You will, of course, have a fine opportunity to teach students, through comparison, what makes good writing. Here's how it might be done with a class of 24.

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*The alternatives presented here are intended for informal classroom assessment. Large-scale, formal assessment demands stringent procedures for the selection of range finders.

1. Divide the class into four small groups of six.
2. Provide each group with six papers, randomly selected (provided papers are anonymous, a student's own paper can be included in the group.
3. Code all papers so that one group will not know what scores another group has assigned (e.g., Group 1 reads papers A-F, Group 2 papers G-I, and so on).
4. Ask each group to select a 4, 3, 2 and 1 paper. (This should take no more than 15-20 minutes.)
5. Ask one student from each group to record scores using the code to identify papers.
6. As soon as all groups have finished, have groups exchange papers and score again.
7. Whan all five groups have read all initial "range finders,"* check for agreement on scores by a show of hands. (Only recorders need participate since they have marked down all scores for each group.)
8. Select papers with universal agreement as range finders.

   NOTE: It is not necessary that an original "set" of range finders be selected. That is, it's ok to use one group's original 4, another's 3, and so on.

9. Score remaining papers using the range finders selected.

Don't be surprised if you have to spend two or three class periods or more selecting range finders. If this seems like too much time to invest, you may wish to select range finders yourself in advance. Remember though that in the process of selecting range finders, students are in fact rating papers and discussing what makes one superior to another: this is the heart of what the holistic scoring experience can provide.

*You can take a shortcut by tallying scores after three readings. If agreement is good, chances are that two more readings won't change things significantly, so you can feel confident using the chosen papers as range finders.

APPENDIX C

Examples of Handwritten Responses

The following examples illustrate how the quality of handwriting may confound scoring results. As these examples show, the best papers are not necessarily those with the neatest penmanship.

HOLISTIC SCORING

PAPER A SCORE: 2

We should try to see things from Toby's side. I mean, it isn't every day that you get to study nature up close. Now Toby has found this wild bird and he has a chance to study it and observe it. Maybe it is not the best thing to happen for a bird to be kept in a cage, but how else is he going to learn from it. After a while he can let the bird go.

HOLISTIC SCORING

PAPER D SCORE: 4

Toby faces a dilemma. If he keeps the bird, he is depriving a wild creature of its freedom. If he lets the bird go, he is taking a chance that the bird will no longer be able to care for itself in the wild. Once tamed, a wild creature often becomes dependent. Toby should release the bird, but watch him carefully for several days to be sure he can care for himself. Then he will know he has made the right decision. His decision to keep the bird as a pet is not a responsible one and I'm sure that when he reconsiders he will change his mind.

ANALYTICAL SCORING

PAPER K SCORE		
	Ideas:	4
	Wording:	4
	Organization:	4
	Total:	12

Dear Chairman Brown

There is much to be said for the 12-month school year. A lot of administrative paper work could be reduced if schools did not have to shut down and reopen each year. More time spent in school could mean a better education for all students. Then why, you may ask do I oppose the 12-month school year? Let me explain my reasons.

First, a young person's experience should not be restricted to school. We all need variety to grow and mature. If we must attend school 12 months out of the year our imagination will stagnate like old slough water and we will be nothing more than programmed robots.

Second, your idea undermines family closeness. At first parents may find it exciting to be free of year-round responsibility for their children. But as years pass and there is no more closeness or companionship in the family parents will regret this decision. By then it will be too late, for school will not just fill our lives but, it will <u>be</u> our lives. Families will have a record.

Chairman Brown you must think in terms of your constituencies. Do not act in haste.

Sincerely yours,
Pat Smith

ANALYTICAL SCORING

PAPER L SCORE		
	Ideas:	2
	Wording:	2
	Organization:	1
	Total:	5

Dear Chairman Brown

Keep the schools open. No way! This is a crummy idea and it is again our personal right So if you can open the school and then you are asking to have a rebelion on you hands That will be your falt.

From Pat Smith

PRIMARY TRAIT SCORING

PAPER U SCORE: 1/2

Dear Mrs Brown,

There are two sides to your idea. Personally I like school and will not mind coming everyday. Not all my friends will feel the same way.

To see the other side, you have not made clear you position on ~~[illegible]~~ vacations. To be specific, do you plan to have any? If there are no vacations 12 months could be a long time. This could effect my vote. I can see we maybe do not need the whole 3 months every summer like we have had. But this change is too drastic. Think of a compromise so everyone can be happy. Then you will get my support.

Thanks

Sincerely - Pat Smith

PRIMARY TRAIT SCORING

PAPER W SCORE: 4

Dear Chairman Brown,

My suggestion to you is to give up on the 12-month school year. Its an idea nobody but the board will like. They do not have to attend school so they do not understand how it is for us.

Our hours are long and the work is very hard. By the time June comes along we are worn to nubs. Not to mention the teachers who must suffer along with us. We need our summers off. We can't learn if we are too tired to see straight.

But here's the real point; school costs money. Everytime we open the doors, there goes some more taxpayers dollars. It costs money to buy heat, books, food, lights, and teachers salaries. Where will it end. You cannot consider yourself a real leader of the community if you let things like this happen.

There are more important things for the board to deal with. We need better parking facilities, better pay so we can here some more teachers and more up to date equipment for our group in gym and track team. These things won't wait. Therefore, do not waste our time and money with ideas nobody believes in. Take my advice; you will not be wrong.

Sincerely, your faithful student.
Pat Smith

APPENDIX D
Examples of Writing Prompts

Following are six sample writing items that you may wish to use with your students as is, or with some modification. Sources for obtaining additional items follow.

1. Pretend that you are a pair of tennis shoes. You've done all kinds of things with your owner in all kinds of weather. Now you are being picked up again by your owner. Tell what you, as the tennis shoes, think about what's going to happen to you. Tell how you feel about your owner. (NAEP)

2. Imagine that your principal asked for suggestions about how to make things better in your school. Write a letter to your principal telling him how just ONE thing you think should be changed, how to bring about the change, and how the school will be improved by it. (NAEP)

3. Pretend that one of your classmates has hurt his leg and will have to stay at home for a long time. Your class would like to cheer him up. You have decided to write him a letter. Write the kind of letter you think he would be happy to get. (NAEP)

4. Pretend that you are interested in a kite that is advertised in a magazine. You want to get one right away. All you need to do is send for it. Write a short letter to the proper place (address and name of kite is provided in prompt) and order a kite. (Adapted from NAEP)

5. One of the things you do in school is to write reports for science, social studies, and other subjects. Imagine that you are going to write a report about the moon for your science class. In the box below are some facts about the moon which you can use in your report. You may also add other facts that you remember about the moon from your reading and classwork, from television, or from listening to people.

   Write your report as you would tell it to your class. Be sure to report the facts in an order that will be clear and that will make sense to your classmates.

   FACTS ABOUT THE MOON

   Made of rock
   Mountainous, contains craters
   Covered with dust
   No air or water
   No plant or animal life (NAEP)

6. Describe an object (not a person, animal or event) you are especially attached to and tell why you feel strongly about. You might want to consider the way you discovered it, the way it came into your life, or the way it has taken on meaning through time. (California Assessment)

Other potential resources for acquiring writing prompts:

California State Department of Education. *An assessment of the writing performance of California high school seniors.* Sacramento, CA: Office of Program Evaluation and Research, 1977.

Frederick, Vicki. *Writing assessment research report: A national survey.* Madison, WI: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 1979.

National Assessment of Educational Progress. *The second national assessment of writing: New and reassessed exercises with technical information and data.* Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States, 1978.

Office of the Los Angeles County Superintendent of schools. *A common ground for assessing competence in written expression.* Los Angeles, CA: Division of Curriculum and Instructional Services, 1979.

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. *Wisconsin pupil assessment program: Writing tests.* Madison, WI: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

APPENDIX E
Additional Readings

This bibliography includes a number of references which may be of additional assistance in understanding procedures for developing and using direct assessment to evaluate writing proficiency.

Breland, Hunter M. and Judith L. Gaynor. A comparison of direct and indirect assessments of writing skills. *Journal of Educational Measurement,* Summer 1979, *16* (2), 119-128.

Results of an investigation comparing direct and indirect assessments of writing ability of 2000 freshman students are reported and discussed, with emphasis on the validity and reliability of each testing approach. For purposes of this study, the direct assessment involved 20-minute essays on three different topics. Each essay was rated independently by two different experienced readers using the holistic scoring method. The College Board's Test of Standard Written English was administered as the indirect measure. Results from three types of analysis show a substantial correlation between direct and indirect assessments of writing skill. The report also includes a review of past research and writing concerning direct and indirect assessment of writing skill, with arguments supporting each approach. In addition, it cites ways in which procedures for direct assessment have improved over recent years.

Brown, Rexford. *What we know now and how we could know more about writing ability in America.* Paper presented at the NIE Conference on Writing, Los Angeles, CA, June 1977. 17 pp.

The author discusses current state of writing quality in America, and suggests means for expanding the knowledge base. Intuitive and empirical bases precipitating students', teachers', and parents' awareness of student writing incompetence are explored, with emphasis on the deficiencies of objective writing tests as means for disclosing evidence of poor writing. Findings from the National Assessment of Educational Progress 1969 and 1973-74 writing assessments are discussed and compared, revealing a decline in the quality of student writing from the first to the second asessments. Methods for scoring and evaluating the student essays are described. In addition, data from the two assessments and information from objective tests are summarized, suggesting that there is little accurate, unbiased, concrete information about writing achievement in America. The author concludes with suggestions for the development of "ideal" instruments and procedures for the direct assessment of writing proficiency.

Cooper, Charles R. and Lee Odell. *Evaluating writing: Describing, measuring, judging.* Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1977. 156 pp.

This book includes a collection of chapters by nationally known writing specialists on the assessment of writing proficiency. The publication resulted from a 1975 NCTE conference entitled "Describing Writing and Measuring Growth in Writing." Included are chapters on: (1) holistic scoring in which procedures, uses, and limitations are described with several examples; (2) primary trait scoring, also describing uses and procedures with examples; (3) use of computers to evaluate maturity of word choice in evaluating essays; (4) the role of syntactic structures in evaluating writing skill; (5) procedures for measuring changes in intellectual processes as part of writing growth assessment; and

(6) the role of peer- and self-evaluation in the measurement of writing skill. All chapters are very practical in their orientation and provide comprehensive lists of references for the interested reader.

Diederich, Paul B. *Measuring growth in English.* Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1974. 103 pp.

This publication describes the research that led to the development of current approaches to writing assessment. The process advocated calls for the independent reading and rating of essays by at least two different teachers. The author describes how this rating can increase the reliability of assigning appropriate grades to students and improve the measurement of student growth in English. In addition, Diederich discusses the identification of factors, such as ideas, organization, and mechanics that contribute to judgments of writing ability, the effects of rater bias on grading papers, methods for measuring improvement in writing, the use of personal versus staff grading, methods of computing the reliability of essay and objective tests and a plan for initiating staff grading of test essays. A series of highly practical appendices also accompanies the book. They address the following issues: identifying and describing papers rated high, middle and low on eight writing qualities; outlining topics for test essays; suggesting objective test items; and listing 96 items that the author considers important for students to learn about writing. This book is highly recommended for those interested in the measurement principles upon which writing assessment is based.

Fowles, M.E. *Manual for scoring the writing sample. Analytical scoring, holistic scoring.* Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service, 1978. 19 pp.

This manual covers analytical and holistic scoring procedures used in evaluating the writing exercise component of the Basic Skills Assessment Writing Program. Brief descriptions of the development and composition of the multiple choice and writing sample parts of the program are included; however, the major portion of the manual is a comprehensive guide to procedures used in a large-scale assessment of student writing. Advantages and disadvantages of both scoring methods are discussed. Instructions to the testing coordinator cover steps in selecting and training chief and assistant chief readers, scorers, and aides, as well as recommendations for scheduling scoring sessions, making room arrangements, duplicating materials, preparing test books for scoring, and arranging for security of exercise booklets. Sample writing exercises are included. Sections with instructions to readers, scorers, and aides can be separated, photocopied, and given to appropriate participants involved in scoring sessions.

Klaus, C.H., et al. *Composing childhood experience: An approach to writing and learning in the elementary grades.* St. Louis, MO: CEMREL, Inc., 1979. 108 pp.

This guidebook describes an approach designed to help teachers in teaching expressive writing to elementary students. Much attention is focused on developing children's expressive writing skills through specific writing activities and exercises. In addition, the report presents a carefully developed system for evaluating student responses to these tasks using the primary trait scoring method, suggests how the evaluation system can be used to help students improve their writing, and shows how to develop a sequence of expressive writing tasks, incorporating continuous evaluation within overall instructional plans. Results of the 1969-70 and 1973-74 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Writing Assessment are presented along with examples of writing exercises, a complete description of the Primary Trait System of scoring, and instructional comments for each of the sample items. Means for comparing classroom writing performance to NAEP results are provided.

National Assessment of Educational Progress. *Write/rewrite: An assessment of revision skills.* Denver, CO: NAEP, 1977. 29 pp.

Selected results from the second National Assessment of Writing are reported and discussed. Data are based on detailed analyses of two writing exercises. The first exercise required 9- and 13-year-olds to write and revise a school report, and the second required 17-year-olds to write and revise a letter in response to a practical, reasonably complex problem. Aproximately 2500 individuals at each age level responded to one of the exercises. Samples of both writing exercises are provided, along with a description of the multiphase essay scoring system used by NAEP. An analysis of students' revision skills reveals that at all three ages, students made more stylistic, informational and mechanical changes than any other type of revision; and that overall, students' revisions had little effect on the quality of final drafts. Information about specific types of revisions made by students is broken down by geographic region, age, sex, race, parental education, and community type. Detailed comparisons between original and final drafts are also included.

Spandel, Vicki and Richard J. Stiggins. *Direct measures of writing skill: Issues and applications.* Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1980. 64 pp.

This document provides a comprehensive review of all statewide writing assessment currently underway, as well as specific guidelines for developing, administering, and scoring a writing assessment based on actual samples of student writing. The relative merits of direct measures of writing skill (writing samples) versus indirect measures (objective tests) are explored briefly. Technical considerations – reliability and validity issues – in ensuring quality assessment are addressed. Procedures for developing writing exercises or prompts are reviewed. And detailed descriptions are provided for three popular essay scoring strategies: holistic, analytical, and primary trait scoring. The three strategies are compared in terms of development, utility and cost. The book concludes with a chapter on adapting writing assessment to specific testing purposes. Eight specific educational decisions that can be facilitated via writing tests are described, and specific guidelines are offered for designing and conducting an assessment tailored to fit each decision.

Mullis, Ina. *The primary trait system for scoring writing tasks.* Denver, CO: National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1975. 32 pp.

The author presents the rationale and procedures involved in implementing the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) primary trait system for scoring writing samples. As defined here, primary trait scoring involves analyzing a piece of writing to determine whether it manifests the traits necessary to have the desired effect upon the intended audience. Sample materials and responses from the 1974 national assessment of writing are included. The author explains that primary trait scoring evolved in response to desire for a scoring method that could be explained meaningfully in reports, defined precisely enough to enable replication of scoring, and interesting and useful enough to provide worthwhile information to educational decision makers. Development of writing tasks, trait-specific scoring guides and procedures, means of identifying desirable writing skills to be measured, and procedures for systematic training of readers are all discussed.

APPENDIX F
Using the Handbook in a Group Workshop

In developing this handbook, CAPT attempted to provide materials that could be used not only individually, but in group teacher workshops as well. Pilot testing completed prior to publication verified, through test scores and teachers' reactions, that the materials can be effectively used in this way. Therefore, some educators may wish to consider using the handbook as a basis for inservice training. In addition, teacher educators might consider using the materials in preservice training programs. The handbook is conveniently subdivided to fit a variety of class or inservice workshop agendas.

A highly trained writing assessment expert is not needed to lead the workshop. It is recommended, however, that an individual go through a workshop as a participant before attempting to lead a workshop. In addition, workshop leaders should have experience teaching writing in the classroom.

The workshop leader can either prepare an oral presentation on the easy-to-understand writing sample scoring procedures, or have trainees go through the handbook at their own pace. Since the practice exercises are designed for use without supervision or assistance, the only **essential** group interaction is discussion of the classroom applications presented in Chapter 5 of the handbook.

Following are three sample workshop agendas that illustrate the flexibility of the materials. It is not necessary that you follow any of these agendas exactly; a review of the agendas will, however, give you an accurate estimate of the time required for suggested workshop activities.

AGENDA #1

Four-Hour Workshop

Introductory Comments — 15 minutes
- Overview of the Workshop
- Review of the Writing Assessment Process
- Other Comments by Workshop Leader
- (Handout: Chapter 1 of Handbook)

Holistic Scoring — 30 minutes
- Description of Scoring Process
- Completion of Practice Exercises
- Discussion and Questions
- (Handout: Chapter 2 of Handbook)

Analytical Scoring — 30 minutes
- Description of Scoring Process
- Completion of Practice Exercises
- Discussion and Questions
- (Handout: Chapter 3 of Handbook)

BREAK — 15 minutes

Primary Trait Scoring Description of Scoring Process Completion of Exercises Discussion and Questions Handout: Chapter 4 of Handbook)	30 minutes
Classroom Applications Review of Instructional Uses (With Examples) Review of Testing/Evaluation Uses (With Examples)	15 minutes
Small Group Discussion Have teachers break up into groups of four or five to generate lists of additional uses.	45 minutes
Small Group Reports and General Discussion Have reporters from each group share the list of uses generated; leader might create a written list of all unique ideas to be shared with participants after the workshop. (Handout)	60 minutes
Alternative Small Group Activity As an alternative or extension of small group activities, ask one member of each group to demonstrate one classroom adaptation to the larger group. Demonstrations should be conducted as if other workshop participants were students.	60 minutes

AGENDA #2

Two Two-Hour Sessions*

Present scoring procedures and practice for all three methods (no break)	2 hours
Present classroom applications and conduct small group discussions (no break)	2 hours

AGENDA #3

Five One-Hour Sessions*

Introduction and Holistic Scoring	1 hour
Analytical Scoring	1 hour
Primary Trait Scoring	1 hour
Review of Classroom Applications and small group discussion to generate new ideas (Participants might be asked to generate additional ideas or develop demonstrations between sesions.)	1 hour
Discussion of Classroom Applications	1 hour

Whenever ideas for classroom instructional use are identified that are not included in this handbook, CAPT would be interested in learning about them. Ideas generated by handbook users will be disseminated in future CAPT publications.

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*It is recommended for the sake of continuity that, if possible, sessions be conducted no more than 24 hours apart

APPENDIX G
Answers to Pre/Posttest

1. ***List the major steps in the writing assessment process.***

   A: Clarifying the reason for assessment, planning the writing exercise, administering the writing assessment, scoring results (p. 4).

2. ***List three different approaches to scoring samples of student writing.***

   A: Holistic, analytical, primary trait (pp. 5 - 6).

3. ***Name the scoring approach that relies on an overall impression of the quality of a given piece of writing.***

   A: Holistic (p. 5, pp. 7).

4. ***Name the scoring approach based on the premise that all writing is done to communicate with a specific audience.***

   A: Primary trait (p. 5 , p. 39).

5. ***Which scoring approach takes the most time to use?***

   A: Analytical (p. 25).

6. ***Which scoring approach takes the least time to use?***

   A: Holistic (p. 5).

7. ***Which scoring approaches are based on prespecified performance criteria?***

   A: Analytical and primary trait (p. 19 , p. 39).

8. ***If you wanted to evaluate specifically how well students follow proper format in writing a business letter, which scoring approach would you use?***

   A: Primary trait (Suggestion 9-10, p. 60).

9. ***Which scoring approach provides the most information about specific strengths and weaknesses in student writing?***

   A: Analytical (p. 57).

10. ***What is a "range finder" paper?***

    A: A range finder is a model paper selected for its representativeness for use as a scoring guide (p. 5 , p. 7).

11. Which of the scoring approaches is probably most subject to a "halo effect"?

A: Analytical (p. 19).

12. Probably the best way to use writing assessment in the classroom is to show students how you are going to score their papers.

A: False; students learn more through involvement than mere demonstration. (p. 57, p. 59ff).